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BRITAIN AND THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT: THE MAKING OF A NEW POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, 1914-1916

by

© TERENCE M. EASTWOOD

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled BRITAIN AND THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT: THE MAKING OF A NEW POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, 1914-1916 submitted by Terence M. Eastwood in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the development of British policy towards the Middle East in the period from the outbreak of European war in 1914 until the signing in 1916 of the Sykes-Picot agreement among Britain, France and Russia providing for the post-war partition of Asiatic Turkey. Discussion among British officials and among the Allies about a replacement for Ottoman sovereignty in the Middle East began even before Turkey entered the war on the side of the Central Powers in November 1914. These discussions intensified once Turkey intervened, and were then greatly affected by the course of battles in Europe and in the Middle East itself. The British initiative in drawing the Arabs into discussions about a territorial settlement introduced an important new element into Middle Eastern diplomacy, for the chosen representative of the Arabs, Sharif Husayn of Mecca, and the course of discussions with him became a source of considerable debate in official British circles. Hence, special attention is paid to the wartime context of the deliberations culminating in the 1916 agreement, and to the effect of Britain's Arab dealings on her emerging new policy for the Middle East.

The focus of attention is on official deliberations, for wartime conditions allowed of little public discussion of Middle Eastern diplomatic questions. The 1916 agreement has long been a controversial one in political and historical circles. The overall aim of this study is to assess the agreement both in light of historical opinion and in light of previous British policy. Much later political controversy generated by the agreement is more properly the subject of post-war history, though that controversy is often useful in posing questions about wartime events.

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A new enemy has appeared in Turkey,
but her defection has its consolations.
It is something to be rid of an
"unspeakable" incubus full of promises
of reform never fulfilled, "sick" but
unrepentant, always turning European
discord to bloody account at the
expense of her subject nationalities:
in all respects a fitting partner for
her ally and master.

Punch, November 1914

CHAPTER I

Introduction: A Controversial Treaty

In 1916, in the midst of a war in which they faced the Ottoman Empire as one of their mutual enemies, Britain, France and Russia concluded a series of bilateral agreements, usually collectively known as the Sykes-Picot agreement,[1] for the partition of the Ottoman dominions in Asia at the successful conclusion of the war. Before the war, the Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire had been the scene of intense European rivalry for economic and political influence. The war, dividing as it did the competitors in the Middle East[2] into two hostile camps, destroyed the basis of the pre-war arrangements designed to maintain a complicated modus vivendi among the great powers to preserve Ottoman territorial integrity in Asia. When, in early November 1914, Turkey irrevocably sided with the Central Powers in their war against the Allies, the way was opened for a Middle Eastern extension of the conflict. The course of the war against Turkey eventually determined that the future of the Ottoman Empire would be on the Allied diplomatic agenda. The Sykes-Picot agreement was then the first Allied attempt to settle among themselves Middle Eastern questions until the end of the war.

This study will focus on British military and diplomatic thinking about the Middle East from the outbreak of the war in August 1914 until the conclusion of the Sykes-Picot agreement in late spring 1916. The official record of Britain's direction of her war effort has largely been made available to scholars, and already several studies of aspects

of British Middle Eastern policy during the war have been made. Studies of French and Russian policy have been less numerous. Three studies of French policy provide balance to the concentration on British sources: that by Albert Pingaud, which was done in the 1930's with access to official French government records; that by Pierre Renouvin of French war aims, which makes only brief reference to the Middle East; and that by George Cassar of French involvement in the Dardanelles campaign, which, though it does not discuss the 1916 agreement, does reflect on the official record of French deliberations during the early course of the war against Turkey. For the Russian perspective, C. Jay Smith's account of Tsarist wartime foreign policy, now twenty years old, remains the major study.[3]

From the British perspective, the Sykes-Picot agreement takes on a special interest as the document marking the end of an historic British policy and as the subject of great debate and controversy for years after its signing. Since Palmerston's day, the great concern dominating British thinking about the Middle East was that a hostile or potentially hostile power or combination of powers might gain control of the Middle Eastern approaches to India, astride which stood the chronically weak Ottoman Empire.[4] By 1913, Turkish weakness and maladministration, the decline of the mid-Victorian close relationship between Britain and Turkey, and the increase in competition for influence in the Middle East had all seriously complicated the Palmerstonian policy, but Sir Edward Grey, British foreign secretary, could still affirm unwavering support for the basic elements of the old policy, at least as it pertained to Asiatic Turkey.

> It is evident that we must get the powers in agreement about a scheme of reforms, otherwise

Turkey will never be induced to accept it.

> A grave question of policy is involved and the only policy to which we can become a party is one directed to avoid collapse and partition of Asiatic Turkey. The effect of the opposite course on our own Mussulmans in India would be disastrous to say nothing of the complications produced between the powers.[5]

Grey's reference to partition was no idle remark. Since 1853, when Tsar Nicolas I had first proposed it, the idea of partitioning the Ottoman Empire had been the perennial kite flying in the European political sky. Disraeli had once told the Queen that "a policy of partition is very simple and does not require much genius to devise," but Sir Henry Layard, British ambassador to the Porte in 1878, proved to be closer to the mark when he contended that, despite misrule by Turkey, "the real difficulty has always been to replace her."[6] In subsequent years, any number of schemes of partition were bruited in European chancellories, but it proved difficult indeed to conceive of the practical means of implementing any of them. Most proposals made the straits connecting the Mediterranean and Black Seas an unfortified waterway open to international maritime commerce but not warships, but in the end all schemes of partition foundered on the question of who would occupy Constantinople if not the Turks.[7] To avoid the complications of partition meant giving Turkey a continued guarantee of her "integrity and independence." Britain took the view that the collapse of Turkey would likely result in an unholy scramble for Middle Eastern spoils.[8] Thus, British policy continued to encourage reform in Turkey and oppose any proposals for partition in order to avoid the risk of European conflict, which, it was feared, might end in permanent disruption of the routes through the Middle East to India; and this policy

was maintained despite military opinion that Britain could not defend Constantinople against a Russian attack, particularly if it were supported by France in the Mediterranean. There was then a great deal for Britain to gain in the Middle East from attachment to the Franco-Russian Entente.[9]

Promoting a scheme of reforms for Turkey had long been an inseparable adjunct of the British policy of maintaining the Ottoman Empire, for reform, however difficult it was to bring about, offered the possibility of continued Turkish sovereignty in the vital cross-roads to India. With Britain installed in Egypt and Aden to protect the Suez Canal and the route through the Red Sea, Ottoman sovereignty from Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf virtually secured the Middle Eastern hinge of the British imperial lifeline.[10] There was little place in British thinking for understanding Turkey's frustration at the increasing European domination of her Asiatic provinces. Herein lay a basic contradiction in British policy. A strong Turkey required a lessening of European interference in her affairs, but Britain was constrained always to compose Middle Eastern rivalries, which often meant concerting with the other powers to force economic and political concessions from Turkey in the name of reform.[11]

The British policy that sought to maintain the status quo in Asiatic Turkey also proved resistant to Turkish and Arab overtures for change in the political balance in the Middle East. In 1913, Grey abruptly rebuffed the overture of the Turkish ambassador, Tewfik Pasha, who renewed a proposal first made in 1911 for an Anglo-Turkish defensive alliance and inclusion of Turkey in the Triple Entente. It was no more acceptable to have Turkey upset the balance than it was to entertain

European schemes of partition.[12] In early 1914, a similar coolness was displayed towards the tentative soundings of Abdullah, the second son of Sharif Husayn of Mecca, who enquired of Lord Kitchener, High Commissioner in Egypt, what the British position would be in the event of his father's split with Turkey. Britain rejected the Arab overture on the same grounds that she opposed other sources of disruption of the Middle Eastern status quo. Before 1914, she was simply not eager to search for a change in her traditional policy of supporting the "integrity and independence" of the Ottoman Empire in Asia.[13]

Once Turkey joined the Central Powers, it seemed impossible to maintain the Ottoman Empire any longer. Predictably, a replacement proved difficult to forge during the war. Why and how Britain opted for the new policy whose first outline is embodied in the Sykes-Picot agreement has been a matter of contention almost from the moment that agreement was signed. Even before the agreement became publicly known, debate about the wisdom of its terms raged in British official circles. The greatest criticisms came from officials on the spot in the Middle East, particularly in Mesopotamia,[14] and from officials in the Indian government and the India Office.[15] When revealed to the world by the Bolsheviks in November 1917, the agreement quickly became a prominent example of the secret territorial bartering so despised by critics of so-called "old diplomacy." Even so, after the war the Anglo-French part of the agreement formed the basis, at least in broad outline, of the territorial arrangements arrived at in the Middle East.

Some of the earliest accounts of the agreement were given by officials who participated in directing the British war effort. Post-war criticism of British wartime diplomacy elicited a defence from Viscount

Grey. In his memoirs, the former foreign secretary argued that the secret treaties must be seen in the light of the major objective of maintaining Allied solidarity.[16] In a more colorful way, Winston Churchill, who had been First Lord of the Admiralty from October 1911 to May 1915, characterized the secret treaties as "simply compulsive gestures of self preservation."[17] In the same vein, an official Foreign Office version of the background of the Sykes-Picot treaty was provided to, and printed by, Shane Leslie in his biography of Sir Mark Sykes, the British negotiator whose name, with that of his French counterpart, François Georges-Picot, is associated with the agreement. In part this version reads:

> In every essential part this arrangement was a war measure forced upon the Allied powers by the exigencies of the Great War.... Allied unity was at stake. That the Arrangement, in spite of grave defects, carried the Allies over a difficult period cannot be denied.[18]

In contrast to the line of argument taken by Grey, Churchill and the officials of the Foreign Office who supplied Leslie with the version he had printed in 1923, several historical accounts of the interaction of wartime military strategy and diplomacy tend to view Allied aims as being motivated by a desire to settle the outlines of a new political arrangement for the post-war Middle East rather than as focusing on the more limited objective of maintaining solidarity. These accounts contend that Britain, France and Russia seized the opportunity afforded by Turkish intervention to ensure their preeminence in the post-war Middle East. In the words of E.M. Earle, "these inter-allied agreements for the disposal of Turkey were instructive instances of the 'old diplomacy' in co-operation with the 'new imperialism.'" In Earle's view, the prime motive in the Middle

Eastern arrangements was the acquisition of real or de facto sovereignty and the economic privileges that went with it. Though strategic factors entered the picture, there was "greater regard for the location of oil fields, mineral deposits, railways and ports of commercial enterprise."[19] Similarly, though he does not specifically discuss the 1916 agreements, W.W. Gottlieb states that "as both sides were fighting over Turkey, the war - whether or not she stood apart - would settle her future." His study of the events of 1914-15 leads him to conclude that "there would have been no sense in a war which, intended for the redistribution of imperial possessions and power, omitted the greatest prize of all," that is, Turkey.[20]

Two other authors take a somewhat similar line to that of Earle and Gottlieb. In his study of the Dardanelles campaign, Trumbull Higgins asserts that both Kitchener and Churchill were at least initially in favour of an offensive against Turkey "for imperial gains, per se." He also emphasizes that the British campaign against Turkey was conceived for political purposes to support Russia and, it devolved, to provide her with Constantinople as a prize for maintaining her war effort. Moreover, he contends that British leaders could not admit publicly to the real motives for the campaign against Turkey, except to speak vaguely of Allied unity, because to do so would have revealed that thousands of men were sent to their death for political and expansionist ends, which would have been an impossible admission either during or after the war.[21] And, suggesting that the whole British nation was expansionist-minded, or at least that so British leaders judged it to be, Aaron Klieman contends that, as the war went on, pressure built in favour of a partition of Asiatic Turkey "to justify the many sacrifices

demanded of the public." He finds little sympathy for Turkey in British circles and a fear that Britain would be left out of the scramble for spoils if she did not act. Describing the agreement as "a striking example of traditional diplomacy in a Middle Eastern context," he further argues that it was poorly designed given inter-allied rivalry in the region, that it was limited in its recognition of Arab sovereignty and so vague in its language as to raise a host of territorial and other questions for the future.[22]

Much recent scholarship, largely based on the record of official deliberations and private correspondence, regards the 1916 agreement as one responding to wartime conditions and containing in its terms arrangements which, with less need for haste, Britain would have preferred to avoid. This contention is put succinctly by Max Beloff. After arguing that Britain had to accommodate her allies, he states that the secret treaties, including Sykes-Picot, "must therefore be interpreted as a direct consequence of the first two years of the war rather than as embodying arrangements Britain would have thought ideal."[23] Beloff's views are generally supported by Lowe and Dockrill, who describe the growth of British imperial interest and commitment in the Middle East as "one of the accidental by-products of the war," and by Busch, Nevakivi and Rothwell, who emphasize the haste involved in the drawing up of the agreement amid the pressures of fighting a war and play down any notion of preconceived or even co-ordinated planning of British war aims in the Middle East in the early war years.[24]

Two other writers assess the agreement in a rather more favourable light than was customary between the First and Second World Wars, when conflicts within the Middle East cast a shadow over Britain's various

wartime undertakings there. On the one hand, Elie Kedourie states that "the Sykes-Picot agreement was the last responsible attempt on the part of Europe to cope with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and to prevent the dissolution from bringing disaster."[25] On the other hand, Elizabeth Monroe, after stating that "the Kaiser forced a huge adjustment in the whole pattern of British thinking about the Middle East," goes on to say that:

> In the event, still remote, of Turkish collapse, no one was sure of Arab capacity for management and some provision was needed for preserving law and order in Arab lands. The Sykes-Picot agreement was not an unnatural one for the purpose; indeed, for its date, it contained a substantial puff of the wind of change that was bringing in the kind of nationalism that the Sharif [Husayn] hoped to dominate.

Not all students of the Middle East would agree with Monroe here. For instance, Halford L. Hoskins, a longtime observer of British interests in the Middle East, believes that Allied wartime arrangements, especially Sykes-Picot, doomed Arab nationalism to "early disillusionment."[26]

Monroe is also of the opinion that most of the blame for the trouble the agreement subsequently caused may be attributed to its vague language. In this regard, the large question has always been whether, and if so to what degree, the agreement and the undertakings to Sharif Husayn conflicted with each other, and if they did, whether by accident or design. Students of the subject have been presented with a challenge by Sir Ronald Wingate, who writes in his biography of his father, Sir Reginald Wingate, Governor General of the Sudan while the agreement was in the making, that "no historian can attempt to reconcile the promises made by McMahon [Kitchener's successor in Egypt] to the Sherif of Mecca with the arrangements made for the partition of the Turkish empire embodied in the Sykes-Picot agreement."[27] However, it

would seem that the whole story is not merely one of irreconcilability as Kedourie's recent study of the role of the McMahon-Husayn dealings would suggest. After the war, the facts and circumstances surrounding the wartime events in the Middle East, and the motives behind them, were misunderstood, misconstrued or even conveniently forgotten in the political wrangling over troublesome contemporary questions.[28]

Perhaps the greatest critic of the agreement, and therefore deserving of special attention, has been George Antonius in his book The Arab Awakening. As Kedourie has shown, this book caused a great stir when it was first published in 1938. It was widely read in official circles in Britain, and its arguments convinced many officials who were then administering British Middle Eastern affairs.[29] Antonius does not mince words.

> The Sykes-Picot Agreement is a shocking document. It is not only the product of greed at its worst, that is to say, greed allied to suspicion and so leading to stupidity: it also stands out as a startling piece of double dealing.

The agreement was stupid because it erected barriers in the way of Arab unity and because by its terms the more advanced Arab societies were placed under foreign rule and the less advanced given a measure of self government. It was in bad faith because, as Antonius believed, Husayn was not informed of the negotiations leading to the agreement and was then kept in the dark about its existence until late November 1917 when it was revealed to him by the Turks, from whom he had broken in mid-1916.[30]

These divergent views raise several questions about the agreement. Was it merely a hastily constructed expedient to get on with the war, a response to the public's need to see some tangible gain from the war, or the result of some imperial plan for expansion in the Middle East? Was it a flawed document inconsistent with Middle Eastern realities, or, in

the circumstances, was it a reasonable basis for a solution to the pending problem of finding a replacement for a defeated Turkey when peace arrived? Are there grounds for accusing Britain of having acted in bad faith? Finally, did the war so change British thinking about the Middle East as to wash out the memory and experience of pre-war policy, or did that memory and experience play its part in the wartime formulations culminating in the Sykes-Picot agreement?

In trying to answer these questions, the focus of attention will be on the development of British official thinking, because during the deliberations in question there was very little reference to outside sources of pressure and opinion, except insofar as officials perceived them. Moreover, because the main debate hinges on interpretation of the relationship between the military course of the war and the aims of diplomacy, special attention will be paid to strategic conditions and decisions and their interplay with diplomacy.

Most accounts of British policy leading to the 1916 agreement focus on events from January 1915 to February 1916, between the genesis of the Dardanelles campaign and the completion of the Anglo-French negotiations superintended by Sykes and Picot, but much of what occurred in 1915 and early 1916 had its roots in the reflex actions and tentative formulations of British officials from London to Simla during August to December 1914. Those early reactions will therefore be examined in some detail, as will events and thinking preparatory to negotiations between Sykes and Picot, which themselves will be presented in as much detail as befits an essay of this sort. In particular, special attention will be paid to the development of British relations with the Arabs through McMahon in Cairo and to the effect of Britain's emerging Arab policy on her relations with France and Russia. The negotiations with Russia in

Petrograd in March and April 1916 will also be examined, for they have frequently been treated as an unimportant aftermath of the main business of Anglo-French talks, probably, one suspects, because the collapse of Russia in 1917-18 rendered void the Russian parts of the agreement. The overall aim of this study is to assess the agreement in the context in which it was created. Though they are fascinating, details of later controversies about the agreement and its role in the subsequent history of the Middle East belong to another study.

CHAPTER II

The Collapse of the Doctrine of Ottoman Territorial Integrity in Asia, August-December 1914

For the first three months of the war, while the European battles absorbed the attention of combattants and non-combattants alike, Turkey and the Allies engaged in what might be described as the "phoney war" of the 1914-1918 conflict. All the Balkan states, except Serbia and Turkey, declared their neutrality at the outset of hostilities. But, on 2 August 1914, Turkey and Germany signed a secret alliance obliging the Turks to enter the war against Russia. Despite the keen desire of Germany for prompt Turkish intervention, the Porte held back from acting on the alliance, though the Turkish army was mobilized on 3-4 August. Until the interventionists in Constantinople could carry the government and prepare the country for war, the Porte continued to play a double game.[1] The seeds of Allied suspicion of Turkey's real intentions sown in the first fortnight of the war were nourished by events over the next six weeks until they grew into a conviction by early October that the Turks would eventually intervene on the side of the Central powers. Even before the Turkish shelling of the Russian Black Sea ports on 29-30 October, Britain had begun to prepare for hostilities in the Middle East. In those preparations can be found tentative formulations that rapidly took on more substance once Turkey intervened.

In August and September 1914, the critical battles in France and Belgium and in East Prussia and Poland featured swift early successes

followed by equally abrupt reverses. In the west, the rapid German advance broke down and was turned back at the Marne. In the east, the early Russian advance collapsed completely, and the Germans began a successful counterattack. While the military picture was still fluid and no clear victor in sight, Grey believed that Turkey would remain neutral, but "if Turkey sided with Germany and Austria and they were defeated," he declared on 15 August, "of course we could not answer for what might be taken from Turkey in Asia Minor."[2] Grey had good reason for suspecting Turkey might side with the Central Powers, for few of the early signs encouraged him to put much faith in Turkish protestations of neutrality.

On 31 July 1914, much to the chagrin of the Turkish government, the British cabinet had approved requisition of two battleships, Sultan Osman and Reshadiye, that had just been completed in British shipyards for the Turkish navy. By contrast, Germany "donated" two ships to the Turkish navy. After a daring escape from the British Mediterranean Squadron, the German battle cruiser Goeben and light cruiser Breslau arrived at the Dardanelles on 10 August, were granted safe passage and given asylum at Constantinople. Later, the German crews intact and Admiral Souchon of the German navy in command, the two ships were unilaterally incorporated by the Turks in the Turkish navy by a bogus sale.[3]

Despite these events, the British Ambassador at the Porte, Sir Louis Mallet, still believed that a major political battle was going on to determine Turkey's position in the war. But he was almost alone in holding out hope of satisfying the Turks, whose greatest need, he felt, was "a real guarantee against the Russians."[4] In the Foreign Office, chagrin at the Turks' behaviour predominated from the start. Both Sir

Arthur Nicolson, Permanent Under Secretary, and the Assistant Under Secretary, Sir Eyre Crowe, disliked a policy which offered more than a simple guarantee of Turkish territorial integrity as it stood. Nicolson judged that Turkey was looking for a way to extend her territories, and therefore he expected such a guarantee to be useless. Crowe, reflecting the feelings of many other British officials, thought it "neither wise nor dignified" to outbid the Germans.[5]

On the day after the German ships reached the Dardanelles, Churchill could see no reason to recompense the Turks beyond what they had paid for the Sultan Osman and Reshadiye, and even then he was in no hurry, for Turkey's siding with Germany would make payment unnecessary. But he advised that Britain "negotiate and temporize."[6] Four days later, on 15 August, with Grey's approval and aid, Churchill took negotiations into his own hands. In a telegram to Enver Pasha, the Turkish War Minister, he warned that Turkey's siding with Germany could, in view of the Allies' naval superiority, "bring a blow delivered at the heart" of Turkey. In a paragraph inserted after consultation with Grey, Churchill offered Turkey a guarantee of her territorial integrity if she would reaffirm her pledge of neutrality. On 19 August, Churchill sweetened the offer to include compensation for the requisitioned ships, if Turkey repatriated Souchon and the German crews. But the Turks would not return the German crews, and Britain would not budge from her position that such return was the first step in any amelioration of Anglo-Turkish relations.[7]

Enver never responded to Churchill's second cable. On 20 August, Turkey officially demanded restitution of the Sultan Osman and Reshadiye, a guarantee against attack from each member of the Entente, immediate abolition of the capitulations, renunciation of interference in Turkey's internal affairs, return of Western Thrace to Turkey (if Bulgaria joined

the Central Powers), and restoration of the Greek Islands.[8] Grey refused to become involved in discussing such demands.[9] Eventually, Britain joined France and Russia in offering a guarantee of Turkey's territorial integrity "against any enemy seeking to profit from the war" in exchange for the observance of "strict neutrality" by Turkey. Agreed to in principle among the Allies as early as 18 August, the guarantee was not officially tendered at the Porte until the end of the month. It also marked the end of Allied attempts to treat with Turkey in any serious way, except for a brief flurry of Russian activity after the Turks bombarded the Black Sea ports.[10]

The Turks responded on 8 September by unilaterally abolishing the capitulations, an action to which even Germany objected. Faith that the Turks would respond to negotiations had all but evaporated in London. Churchill concluded that the parties to the political struggle in Constantinople were "only activated by considerations of force and fear, and only restrained by their great doubt as to who is going to win the war in Europe."[11] On 21 September, having concluded that Turkey would soon join Germany in open hostilities, Churchill instructed the Mediterranean Squadron to sink the Goeben and Breslau, "no matter what flag they fly, if they come out of the Dardanelles."[12] Five days later, after a Turkish warship was turned back by the British navy at the Dardanelles, Turkey closed the Straits, thereby cutting off the all-weather communication route with Russia.

As has been seen, both Grey and Churchill believed that Turkey was awaiting some sign as to the ultimate victor in Europe. Most British leaders expected a short war. Grey has recorded that Kitchener's prediction of a war lasting three years "seemed to most of us unlikely if not incredible."[13] With a short war in view, there were strong

reasons for encouraging Turkish neutrality and altogether avoiding an extension of the conflict. Yet the Germans had stolen the intiative, a fact which exasperated Churchill, who felt responsible for the escape of the German ships and itched to sink them. Even the usually temperate Grey frequently made bellicose statements about the dire consequences to Turkey if she were to intervene. Preoccupied with the main fight against Germany and Austria, accustomed to Turkey's weakness, and convinced of the folly of her acting against the very nations best situated to strike at her, the Allied governments refused to mount a diplomatic offensive to wean Turkey from her evident course of alliance with Germany. The Allied position was well summarized by Serge Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister. He saw no use in outbidding the Germans. In the event of a German defeat, there would be no need to offer Turkey anything; in the event of Allied defeat, all pledges to Turkey would be worthless.[14]

It is true that the offer of territorial integrity was no inducement to those in Constantinople, such as Enver, who were determined to gamble on the German alliance.[15] It is also true that the predictions of a short war led the Allied governments to take a cautious and unadventurous line in the hope that a favourable break in the fighting would influence the interventionists in Constantinople to reassess their position. Moreover, pressured by Lord Kitchener to keep the Suez canal open until Indian troops had passed to France and concerned lest Anglo-Turkish hostilities arouse the Indian Muslims against Britain, Grey had all the more reason to avoid provoking Turkey.[16] But perhaps the greatest bar to a forward policy in the Near East and the greatest illustration of the Allies' desire to keep Turkey out of the conflict may be seen in the conduct of diplomacy towards the Balkan states.

A forceful policy to bring Bulgaria, Greece and Rumania into the war ran into several obstacles. A feverish round of negotiations followed the proposals of 7 August by the Greek Prime Minister, Eleutherios Venizelos, for mutual concessions among Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Rumania to compose their rivalries and create a Balkan bloc in support of the Allies. The plan quickly fell to the ground when Serbia refused to cede her territory in Macedonia to Bulgaria, and when Venizelos himself balked at Sazonov's insistence that Greece return Kavalla, taken in 1913, to Bulgaria.[17] On 18 August, after the Goeben and Breslau incident had seemed to clinch Turkey's position, Venizelos dropped his plan, and, with King Constantine's backing, offered to join the Allies. Grey strongly advised the British cabinet to decline the Greek offer, because it risked provoking Turkish or Bulgarian intervention as enemies. Worst of all, it risked estranging Sazonov and the Russians, who dreaded a hostile Turco-Bulgarian combination, and who might suspect Anglo-Greek designs on Constantinople and the Straits. At a time when Russia's contribution to the war against Germany was vital, Grey wanted no chance of a breakdown of Allied solidarity.[18]

Soon after his second cable to Enver had failed to produce a reply Churchill swung vociferously behind the promotion of a Balkan bloc. But Grey felt that he could do nothing to force a Balkan agreement beyond what the Balkan states could themselves manage.[19] As Asquith, the Prime Minister, later testified, until Turkey intervened it was felt in London that "if the neutral Balkan states remained separate they had also better remain neutral."[20] Hence, the Greek offer was in part declined to avoid prejudicing any future attempts to form a Balkan bloc if Turkey did eventually intervene. So long as Germany enjoyed success on the battlefield, as she did in late August, the best the Allies could

hope for was a neutral Balkans. After the battle of the Marne, Grey counted on the indecisiveness of the war and the vagaries of Balkan politics, in particular the uncertainty of Bulgaria's position, to keep Turkey neutral for a while longer. After mid-September, even Sazonov gave up active effort to bring about a Balkan coalition, and concentrated his efforts on keeping Rumania from drifting into the Central Powers' camp.[21]

Grey did not entirely reject stronger measures to move Turkey. At the end of August, he instructed Mallet to intimate to the Turks, as if on the ambassador's own initiative, that should they join Germany Britain would regard herself "free as regards Egypt and free to support the Arabs against Turkey and another Moslem authority for Arabia and control of the Holy Places." The ambassador, however, never did use these threats.[22] It seems hardly likely that the Porte needed more explicit instructions in the consequences of its actions than the veiled threats already given. Mallet's inclination being "to postpone hostilities with [Turkey] in the hope of averting them altogether," he tended to temporize and play for time.[23]

Grey's reference to the Arabs in his instructions to Mallet was no idle remark. Though his first concern was to avoid any action that would inflame Indian Muslim opinion, he intended to work towards the realization of his threat. On 1 September, in spite of the concern of the Viceroy of India, Sir Charles Hardinge, over the effect of Britain's supporting an Arab break with the Turks, Grey let Lord Crewe, Secretary of State for India, know that once Turkey joined Germany he was prepared "at once [to] give every support and encouragement to the Arabs to possess themselves of Arabia and the Holy places." He left it to Crewe to make contingency plans and supervise contact with the Arabs "from Aden

or elsewhere."[24] Had the India office maintained control of Britain's Arabian affairs in the coming months, the course of British Middle Eastern policy might have taken a decidedly different turn. Instead, Kitchener emerged as the initial agent of British contact with the Arabs.

Though he was deeply preoccupied with military affairs in France during September, Kitchener did find time to renew his contact of a few months before with Abdullah.[25] On 24 September, at the urging of his former secretary, Ronald Storrs, who was still in Egypt, he had a message sent via Cairo to Abdullah asking what the Sharif's position would be in the case of Turkish aggression against Britain. In "a guarded and friendly" reply, which arrived in Cairo on 30 October but had left Mecca days before Turkish intervention, Abdullah noted that while desiring "closer union" with Britain, his father wanted a written promise guaranteeing him against "foreign and Ottoman aggression." The courier from Mecca also brought a verbal message from the Sharif, who had reportedly said: "Stretch out to us a helping hand and we will never aid these oppressors."[26]

On 31 October, a telegram to Cairo, seen and approved by Grey but not the cabinet, transmitted a second message from Kitchener for Husayn. It gave the requested pledge against British internal intervention in Arabia, and promised "every assistance against foreign aggression." The message ended with a reference to the Caliphate, the office of the spiritual head of Islam, then constituted in the person of the Turkish Sultan.

> It may be that an Arab of true race will assume the Caliphate at Mecca and Medina and good may come by the help of God out of all evil which is now occurring.[27]

In Cairo, Storrs translated Kitchener's message into a rather longer version that raised the spectre of a general Arab revolt led by Husayn. Cairo later issued a proclamation "to the natives of Arabia and the Arab provinces" elaborating further on Britain's attitude towards an Arab revolt and assumption of the Caliphate.[28]

Husayn's reply did not arrive in London until 10 December. The Sharif said that he was as yet in no position to break with the Turks, but would await an opportunity. In contrast to the British, Husayn was cautiously non-committal. The matter then rested for several months.[29]

Though Grey was prepared to encourage an Arab movement, even to the extent of advancing two thousand pounds sterling to one Major 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri, a former Arab officer in the Ottoman army, to sound out Syrian opinion, the India Office and Indian government were surprised and alarmed to hear of the various initiatives, actual or proposed, in Arabia.[30] They regarded Husayn as a minor chieftain who was unlikely to rally other Arabs outside the Hijaz. Any talk of transferring the Caliphate from the person of the Sultan to the negligible Husayn created apoplexy in some old India hands. Hardinge believed that Cairo's assurances went "too far and might prove embarrassing since we are taking action in Mesopotamia and might have to do so elsewhere."[31] Even stronger in his condemnation of the London-Cairo policy was A.H. Grant, India's foreign secretary, who believed a successful Arab revolt would produce "a Frankenstein Monster" and "an infinite source of trouble in the future."

> What we want [he noted] is not a united Arabia: but a weak and disunited Arabia, split up into principalities so far as possible under our suzerainty - but incapable of co-ordinated action against us, forming a buffer against the powers in the West.[32]

But quite different advice was coming from Cairo. Even before Turkey entered the war, Storrs and Captain G.F. Clayton, Sudan agent in Cairo and director of the intelligence department, had been fostering the notion that Husayn might serve as the focal point to rally Ibn Sa'ud (the Emir of Nejd), the Idrissi of Asir and Imam Yahia, the two former of whom had clashed with Husayn over the Sharif's championship of Ottoman sovereignty in the Arabian peninsula before the war. Kitchener did not challenge this sanguine view of Arabia affairs presented from Cairo. Grey was attracted by the idea of an Arab uprising against the Sultan, but he did not closely supervise the contacts with Husayn, leaving the matter of details to Kitchener.[33]

As to the prospect of an Arab Caliphate, Grey was emphatically against raising a "dangerous question", but he did not press his objections.[34] Before Turkey intervened, he had even ventured that "it might not be possible to leave [the Holy Places] entirely outside the sphere of British action."[35] Whereas opinion in the Foreign Office, the India Office, and in Simla, the seat of the Indian government, saw the establishment of an Arab Caliphate as likely to ignite religious passions and complicate political issues, if it were not downright impractical, Kitchener and his Cairo associates were beginning to conceive of a British sponsored Arab Caliphate governing an Arab confederacy as a potential means of weakening the Turkish pan-Islamic movement and establishing a potent British client in the Middle East.

In all the discussion of Middle Eastern possibilities, little attention was paid to the interests of Britain's ally, France. As early as mid-October, G.H. Fitzmaurice, who was home on leave from his post as First Dragoman at the British embassy in Constantinople and who reputedly knew more about Turkish affairs than Mallet,[36] had suggested

promoting an anti-Turkish movement among Syrian Arabs, provided French objections could be overcome.[37] Kitchener avidly took up the idea of British action in Syria, and, in a private letter of 11 November 1914, pressed his views on Grey. In the war lord's view, France's activity in Syria would only distract her from her primary concern with North Africa, and, he added:

> I believe it is more sentiment than anything else which induces France to keep her influence in Syria and if we frankly said, we do not want Syria, they would probably say the same and allow the formation of an Arab state that would enable the new Khalifate to have a sufficient revenue to exist.[38]

In fact, action against Turkey in Syria was to become a favorite strategic concept of Kitchener, supported by Lord Fisher, who had returned to the Admiralty in August 1914. Both men coveted Alexandretta as an entrepôt for another imperial lifeline running down the Euphrates to the Persian Gulf,[39] but their colleagues firmly resisted plans that encroached on France's historic interests in Syria. Grey wrote on Kitchener's letter: "We cannot act as regards Syria."[40] Crewe was disturbed by negotiations with the Arabs undertaken behind France's back. And Nicolson and Clerk, no doubt mindful of Grey's own pre-war pledge of British recognition that Syria was a French sphere of activity, expressed their concern over proposals to encourage a Syrian Arab revolt.[42]

The French themselves were not unaware of the consequences of Anglo-Arab affinity. Early in December, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Théophile Delcassé, asked the British ambassador in Paris, Sir Francis Bertie, whether Britain was doing anything to stir up Arab against Turk. And the French ambassador at Petrograd, Maurice Paléologue, had reminded the Tsar of France's "precious heritage of historical memories

and moral and material interests" in Syria.[43]

However, only in Mesopotamia did Britain take any decisive military action, and then only in an area where her interests hardly clashed with those of her two major allies. The possibility of action against Turkey in the Persian Gulf had been in the air since August when there was a brief discussion of Admiralty proposals for the preparation of an expeditionary force made up of troops stationed at Karachi. On 26 September, Sir Edmund Barrow, Military Secretary at the India Office, had recommended to Crewe that a force be sent to the Gulf "ostensibly to protect the oil installation, but in reality to notify the Turks that we meant business and to the Arabs that we meant to support them."[44]

Though Crewe immediately alerted India as to the political situation in Turkey, nothing was decided in cabinet until 2 October, when orders for an expeditionary force were approved.[45] Of the factors entering into the calculation of the need for British action in Mesopotamia, the prime consideration was undoubtedly a desire to deter the Sheikdoms of the Gulf from joining in any Turkish-sponsored Muslim holy war (Jihad) against Britain in Asia. On 9 October, Crewe wrote Hardinge that he regarded "the moral effect on the Arab chiefs as the primary and the protection of the oil stores as secondary" objects of the force. Though Churchill's staff strongly recommended protecting the oil stores and the pipeline running into Southern Persia, the First Lord himself was prepared to shop elsewhere for oil and deal with Turkey "at the centre," a curious stance for the man who had negotiated the government's purchase of majority shares in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company whose pipeline his office wished to protect. Most probably

he calculated that protecting the small flow of oil from Peria, amounting to about two per cent of United States output, was not a strategic necessity during the war.[46]

Diverted from troops originally assigned for service in France, the original force of 5000 men assembled in India in October was considered sufficient for the protection of the oil stores kept at Abadan and, if necessary, for the capture of Basra. In the event of war, the force would be controlled by the Indian government, subject to direction "as to the scope of operations" from the India Office in London. As a measure of the caution with which the whole enterprise began, the original landing at Abadan at the head of the Gulf was changed to Bahrein Island, where the force was less likely to excite the attention of the Turks, when Hardinge suggested that the mere protection of the pipeline, which India had long feared it would be asked to defend, was no reason to risk provoking Turkey or committing Indian forces. Hardinge appears to have become reconciled to the venture only because it seemed Britain would continue to occupy Basra after the war.[47]

From the outset the expedition also had its political side. In early October, Captain W.H.I. Shakespear was sent from England to seek the assistance of Ibn Sa'ud, and later from India Hardinge dispatched Sir Percy Cox, whose knowledge of the Gulf was unparalleled, to act as special political advisor to the force.[48] The political intelligence emanating from the Gulf in time supplied Hardinge and the India Office with ample evidence to contradict the view of Arabian affairs coming from Egypt. Britain's Middle Eastern affairs were beginning to be conducted on two axes, one centreing on Kitchener supported by intell-

igence from Cairo and Khartoum and the other focusing on Hardinge and India Office officials fed by intelligence from Mesopotamia, with a lethargic Grey and hard-pressed officials at the Foreign Office left to mediate between the two.

On 4-6 November, the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force began operations against Fao at the head of the Gulf. Within two weeks, the Turks having retreated, British troops occupied Basra. The rapid success of British arms, and the need to consolidate the force's position, raised the question of further advance, whether to Baghdad or some intermediate point. Given the limited capabilities of the force, Baghdad was ruled out, but the advance on and capture of Qurna at the juncture of the Tigris and the old channel of the Euphrates was completed on 8 December in the hope of providing a station for yet further advance to Amara and thence to Baghdad.[49] Grey remarked that much depended on whether, if taken, Baghdad could be held, which in turn depended on whether the Turks offered any forceful opposition. Kitchener placed great emphasis on the attitude of local Arab tribesmen, and believed that "the problem [of advance] would be greatly facilitated" by their cooperation.[50] It is clear that neither Grey nor Kitchener had reliable information on which to make decisions. Early success had bred a fatal optimism, which would contribute to later disasters, for the Arab support Kitchener hoped for proved illusory and the Turks did not keep retreating.

The easy success of British arms also raised the question of future political arrangements for Mesopotamia. Having earlier deprecated the whole venture, Hardinge now recommended publicly declaring the annexation of Basra to consolidate Britain's position, safeguard the oil,

solve the question of the terminus of the Baghdad railway, secure Arab support, and provide "a source of enormous commercial development." His arguments were echoed in London by Lord Inchcape, a shipping magnate with interests in the Gulf trade.[51]

In his response to Inchcape's proposals, Crowe argued that if Turkey were defeated,

> nothing will stop Russia and France from asking for and taking their slice of Ottoman territory. We need therefore not fear any designs we now form upon Mesopotamia will give rise to Russian and French claims that would not be put forward except for our move.

For these reasons he favoured annexation as against a protectorate, but agreed with Nicolson that it was premature to declare British intentions. But Grey was against annexation as likely to upset the French and Russians, and as "contrary to the useful principle of provisional occupation pending final settlement of the terms of peace."[52]

Useful though that principle might appear to have been, Turkish intervention had pushed the question of the future of the Ottoman Empire in Asia one step beyond the threatening gestures made while Turkey was neutral. Even before the events of 29 October to 5 November, British policy had shifted to a search for Balkan allies. In reporting the shift to the King, Asquith had also remarked that in future "Great Britain must finally abandon the formula of 'Ottoman integrity', whether in Europe or in Asia."[53] The Turco-German combination threatened British interests in Egypt, against which Turkish troops were being moved, and in Mesopotamia, where normal British commerce had been interrupted along the Shatt-al Arab. The moves to contact Husayn and take action at the Gulf were then responses to the Turco-German threat in the two areas where Britain felt free to act without consulting her allies.

But all was not smooth sailing with the new policy being forged in the Balkans and the Middle East. The British bid to extract concessions from the other Balkan states to entice Bulgaria into the war and screen Turkey from the Central Powers conflicted with Russian designs. Early in October, Russia had independently reached an agreement with Rumania promising her gains in Rumanian-speaking regions of Austria-Hungary in return for her firm guarantee of continued neutrality.[54] For the time being, Sazonov was content to secure Rumanian amity and to postpone Turkish hostilities as best he could. He thoroughly discounted the possibility of rallying the Balkan countries, and was eager to push his vast plan, unveiled in September 1914, for the post-war dismemberment of the German Reich and the Hapsburg Empire. In that plan, Russia, France, Rumania and Italy would all gain territory at the expense of the Central Powers.[55]

When war with Turkey was finally an irrevocable fact, much of the ground was cut from under Sazonov's policy. Still apparently hoping to avoid conflict with Turkey even after the shelling of the Black Sea ports, he tried to negotiate with the Porte for the dismissal of the German sailors.[56] But the foreign minister could not stand against opinion in his own country. Not all elements in the Russian goverment supported his visionary schemes. In September, Sir George Buchanan, British ambassador to Russia, had reported that, though Sazonov himself talked only vaguely of the Dardanelles and laid no claim to Constantinople, the Minister of Agriculture, A.V. Krivoshein, looked forward to a Turkish declaration of war and a final settlement of the question of the Straits. Buchanan also reported on the growing body of opinion in Petrograd that only at the expense of Turkey would Russia gain secure, material advantage

from the war.[57] Once Turkey commenced hostilities, the force of that opinion was felt. On 2 November, the Tsar issued an Imperial Manifesto declaring that Turkey's intervention would "open the way for Russia to settle the historic problems on the shores of the Black Sea handed down to her by her ancestors."[58]

Russia registered no official claim with her allies at this time, the Manifesto being primarily for domestic consumption. Indeed, Sazonov attempted to focus the Russian military effort against Turkey on the Transcaucasian frontier. But Grey wished to avoid military operations that might spill over into Persia and risk converting the bogey of Jihad into reality. He may also have had no desire to see Russia begin a full scale campaign against Turkey that might weaken her effort against the Central Powers.[59] Whatever his thinking, he took the initiative by responding to Russia's traditional desires regarding Constantinople and the Straits. In talks with Grey and then King George V between 9 and 13 November, the Russian ambassador, Count Benckendorff, learned of Britain's objection to a policy which destroyed Germany as a European power but her agreement to Russia's eventual control of Constantinople and the Straits. On 14 November, Grey detailed Britain's position in a note to Sazonov. He predicted that the recent Turkish hostilities would "render inevitable the complete solution of the Turkish problem, including the question of the Straits and Constantinople, in agreement with Russia." He also made it clear that, even if Turkey collapsed, final resolution of Turkish issues depended on the defeat of Germany.[60]

By December, Russian armies fighting the Central Powers had been severely shaken. They held fast in Galicia, but could make no further advance against the Austro-Hungarian forces. In Poland, the Germans were putting pressure on seriously overextended Russian forces. As the

year drew to a close, the Turks began an offensive in Transcaucasia that was to bring a Russian call for help to her allies in early January 1915. As the tide turned, the force behind Sazonov's policy ebbed away. Henceforth, the problem would not be so much to counteract Russian plans to wreck the balance of power in Europe as to keep the Tsar's armies in the field. Grey had pledged Britain's good faith on the question of the Straits. For the time being, the prospect of Russia's dominating Central Europe was academic.

What, then, can be said of Gottlieb's suggestion that the Allies' ineffectual policy vis-a-vis Turkey in 1914 disguised their designs for imperial expansion in the Middle East at the expense of the Ottoman Empire? On the British side, both Grey and Mallet, the two officials closest to the problem, tried to avoid war with Turkey. Even the most belligerent statements of British officials should not be mistaken for a desire to draw Turkey into the war. Behind all such statements was the expectation that Turkey meant to make war against the Allies. Nor was Russian and French policy before November 1914 constructed to draw Turkey into the war to provide the spoils. Sazonov was dreaming European not Asian dreams, and the French were preoccupied with survival on their own soil. When Gottlieb remarks that, whatever Turkey did, the Allies were still fighting a war for Turkish spoils, he in effect adopts the attitude taken by Enver and his associates, who presumeably calculated that Turkey would gain nothing, and could lose much, from maintaining her neutral stance. Turkey did not stand apart. What would have happened had she remained neutral is a matter of conjecture.

Moreover, the one effective deterrent to active Turkish hostility, even in spite of the German alliance, would seem to have been the formation

of a Balkan bloc hostile to the Central Powers. Not until October did the British cabinet firmly set out to form such a coalition. It never came about, despite great effort thoughout 1915, and does not, in retrospect, seem to have ever been a likelihood.

As 1914 came to a close, detailed Allied planning of changes in the Middle East had apparently been postponed until the defeat of the Austro-German-Turkish triplice, and would in that event be a subject of the terms of peace. Already certain outlines were becoming clear. Russia would have her outlet to the Mediterranean. By her military action in the Persian Gulf and the Mesopotamian region, Britain was staking a claim there, as yet unspecified. The British intention to sponsor an Arab revolt, if carried through, doomed Ottoman suzerainty in the Empire's Arab provinces. France would have a part in the succession. Beyond that everything was hazy. How long it remained hazy would be determined by the events of the new year.

It is, however, clear that the mechanisms for planning the British diplomatic and military war effort were far from streamlined in 1914. The cumbersome pre-war cabinet of twenty-one members continued to direct affairs until the end of November. The cabinet did not work to an agenda, had no secretary, and kept no records. So long as pre-war arrangements made with France worked themselves out, all went relatively smoothly. But the prospect of war in the Middle East put strains on the cabinet's ability to formulate new strategic plans.[61] So, at the end of November 1914, Asquith adapted the pre-war Committee of Imperial Defence to wartime conditions by setting up the War Council. Though it was to grow in number, the first War Council which sat on 25 November 1914 had as members Asquith, Kitchener, Churchill, Grey, David Lloyd George, the

Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Arthur Balfour, a former Conservative prime minister. In addition, various military advisors sat in on discussions when needed. Lieutenant-Colonel Maurice Hankey acted as secretary, as he had to the C.I.D. before the war. The War Council did not meet regularly to conduct the day to day business of managing government control of the war effort, but was summoned, in Asquith's words, "when serious questions involving new departures in policy or joint strategic operations arose."[62]

Early in the war personalities counted for much. Asquith presented a curiously detached figure. Prime minister for over six years by August 1914, he had his own "well established routine of authority," which seemed to consist of never forcing an issue and acting as a cabinet umpire whose own views, increasingly during the war, were less independent than the sum of those of his colleagues. He disliked the "unfamiliar and distasteful problems" of the war and longed for its end.[63] He was, as Balfour described him, "an arbitrator, an eminently fairminded judge ... a splendid chairman of a committee .... But I have never heard him originate or suggest."[64]

In contrast, Churchill was positively electric with the exhilaration of making decisions in the tense atmosphere of war. His zest was undeniable, but Asquith doubted his ability to rise to the top despite his prodigious energies. Everyone appeared to approve of his handling of the Admiralty in 1914.[65] Once it was evident that Turkey could not be kept neutral, Churchill opted for a knockout blow directed at Constantinople. His desire for a master stroke in the East, in which he was supported by Lloyd George and Hankey, would have its moment in the New Year. And, at his urging, the constitution of a Balkan bloc became an object of British policy.

In 1914, Kitchener overshadowed his staff, and his leadership had not yet begun to suffer under close examination. In the Middle East, his

influence was used with Sharif Husayn, and, above all, his concerns about a Turkish-sponsored Jihad were taken as those of a man experienced in Indian and Egyptian affairs. The fear that Turkey might cause Britain grave trouble in her Muslim possessions had a critical bearing on decisions to sponsor an Arab uprising and to secure the Persian Gulf. Both operations required little material support from the War Office. If there was one thing Kitchener could not or would not dispense, it was troops.

Grey's natural cautiousness seems to have deepened during the war. He had always deprecated the value of diplomacy unbacked by force. In wartime he became a firm believer in the force of battlefield success, which he judged would be critical to Allied diplomatic efforts in the Balkans and the Middle East.[66] Later on, his growing blindness and the extra strain of office in wartime sapped Grey's energies, but in 1914 he approved of three critical aspects of policy related to the Near East. Though he was in no hurry to divide the spoils prematurely, he did not hesitate to hold out the prospect of partition in Asiatic Turkey. He put his weight behind the overture to the Arabs. And, once Turkey intervened, he strove to rally the Balkan states behind the Allied cause. Temperamentally disqualifying himself from advancing advice on strategic questions, he none the less promoted a forward policy in the Near East. That he did so without closely supervising the details also seems to have been true.

Indeed, it was becoming clear that a few strong personalities in London could not properly gather and evaluate information on which to make decisions. Under the prevailing conditions, planning continued to resemble a cacophony of apparently uncoordinated voices. Grey's initiatives merely delayed the detailed formulation of a replacement for the doctrine of Ottoman integrity. Britain found herself thrust into the old game of

wartime improvisation.

CHAPTER III

The Idea of Partition Takes Hold, January-June 1915

In a discussion of Middle Eastern issues at the first meeting of the War Council, Churchill "suggested that the ideal method of defending Egypt was by an attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula." He stressed the difficulties entailed in what would be a large operation, and mooted the alternative of a feint on Gallipoli and an attack on Haifa or a port on the Syrian coast. Taking Gallipoli would enable Britain "to dictate terms at Constantinople."[1] Though at the same meeting Grey deprecated the chances of obtaining Balkan allies for such a venture as Churchill proposed, the subject of how to deal effectively with Turkey, first bruited by Churchill when discussions took place between the Admiralty and the War Office in August 1914,[2] was now definitely on the agenda of those on the War Council who fancied themselves strategic planners. The break provided by Christmas and the normal looking ahead to the new year occasioned a flurry of memoranda on what to do in the Middle East. As discussions of strategy progressed, it became apparent that reasoning about Middle Eastern campaigns had a heavy leaven of political and diplomatic yeast mixed in with the pure dough of military calculation. Indeed, it was not long before the whole question of the future of the Ottoman Empire began to loom over practically all Middle Eastern planning.

The two best known assessments of what to do in the Middle East were by Lloyd George, who before the war had taken practically no interest in military affairs, and by Hankey, who as secretary to the

C.I.D. had first hand knowledge of strategical planning for the Empire.[3] Both men essentially echoed an argument whose substance can be found in Churchill's letter to Asquith of 29 December 1914, in which he asked the provocative question: "Are there not other alternatives than sending our armies to chew barbed wire in Flanders?"[4] Churchill, Hankey and Lloyd George were all agreed that stalemate in the West forced consideration of other options. Hankey saw a strike at Germany through Turkey as the most effective means of advancing the Allied cause. Like Churchill, Lloyd George despaired of the effect on civilian morale of sending the "New Armies" of civilian recruits to their death in France. A victory somewhere was essential. There was also general agreement that a successful venture against Turkey would promote a Balkan combination in favour of the Allies. As Churchill later put it, a Balkan bloc "was the obvious supreme objective in this part of the world."[5]

Circumstances then contrived to stampede the War Council to a decision. From Russia, word arrived in London early on 2 January 1915 that Grand Duke Nicolas had appealed for a demonstration by Britain against the Turks to lessen pressure on embattled Russian forces in the Caucasus. At a series of War Council meetings beginning on 7 January, the issue of action in an eastern theatre dominated discussions. In opposition to the growing enthusiasm for an extension of the fight to the Middle East, the Commander of the British Expeditionary Force in France, Field Marshall John French, stood virtually alone. He argued that Britain had to strike the Germans "with all available strength" in the west while the Allies held numerical superiority.[6] But Kitchener still intended to husband British resources. He did not put great faith in the "New Armies" or the Territorials, and was inclined to mark troops of either variety for neither France nor the Middle East.[7] The question

facing the War Council was then this: how, without troops and without weakening defences in the west, to act to bring in the Balkan states and respond to the Grand Duke's plea?

The first step in the approval of the Dardanelles scheme was a negative, but momentous, one. After hearing his case, the War Council refused French's request for more troops, "as the advantages would not be commensurate with the heavy losses involved."[8] From this point on, French's relations with the politicians went from bad to worse. At the War Council the next day, 8 January, Kitchener ruled out the alternatives to the Dardanelles in the east. In a stroke Britain might reopen the Straits and attract Balkan allies to "settle the Near Eastern question." He spoke of cooperation with the fleet, mentioned the figure of 150,000 men as a suitable force for the operation, and asked for an opinion from the Admiralty on the possibility of an attack on Alexandretta.[9]

The irresolute drift of the discussion at these first two meetings in the new year was arrested at a third meeting on 13 January by Churchill's revelation of an Admiralty plan[10] to reduce the forts at the Dardanelles in a series of operations, clear the minefields, and proceed to Constantinople to sink the Goeben and Breslau. Here was a plan that overcame the difficulty of finding troops and apparently had service approval. Its success promised much. It even had the virtue that, if unsuccessful, it could be halted without great risk, or at least so it was initially argued in its favour. That the plan was more in the nature of a generalized opinion of a junior officer than a detailed outline for action seems to have escaped everyone. As the meeting drew to a close, Asquith intervened to sum up the deliberations.[11] Hankey recorded four conclusions. Though no final decision had been made, plans for action against Zeebrugge

on the Belgian coast were to be carried forward. The Admiralty was instructed to assess the feasibility of action in the Adriatic to bring Italy into the war, and to prepare a naval expedition against the Gallipoli peninsula "with Constantinople as its objective." The fourth conclusion was ominous. If there continued to be a stalemate in Western Europe until spring, the War Council would consider deployment of troops in another theatre. The implication was clear. Though the original plan called for a purely naval expedition, it is not true, as is often claimed, that there was no intention to devote troops to the Middle East. Kitchener had acknowledged the value of a combined operation, but in January no troops were available, at least none the war lord would release. When troops became available, and if there was no spring breakthrough, the question would be reopened.[12]

Over the next fortnight, while the Admiralty proceeded with plans to bombard the forts guarding the Dardanelles, two other schemes continued to receive consideration: an attack on Austria from the Adriatic, assuming Italy to be an ally; and an attack on Austria in cooperation with Serbia, using Salonica as a base. One important defection from the consensus of 13 January occured when the First Sea Lord, Admiral Fisher, began to object to the Dardanelles scheme. In his view, the Navy's main purpose was to engage the enemy fleet in battle. The Dardanelles operation risked ships without offering any hope of enticing the enemy fleet into battle. Fisher complained bitterly of the Army's failure to provide troops to back up some amphibious venture that might bring out either the German or Turkish fleet.[13]

At the War Council meeting on 28 January, Fisher was diverted from expressing his objections. During the meeting Kitchener took him aside and persuaded him to hold his tongue. Months later, in testimony

before the Dardanelles Commission, Fisher described himself as from that point being behind the scheme "whole hog, totus porcus."[14] In his memoirs, Fisher has also complained that Churchill "outargued" him, but it would seem that a combination of the First Lord's argumentative powers, pressure from Kitchener, whose power in the War Council remained supreme, and the firm consensus of the other Council members in favour of the naval expedition stifled the exuberant but erratic octogenarian's objections.[15] The Council reconfirmed its approval of the plan. Desire for a cheap victory to settle the Balkans carried the day. Even the pessimistic Grey now had hopes that a victory would unravel the Balkan tangle.[16]

Swayed by strong Russian pleas for aid, the French had also agreed to support the operation. Britain would command at the Dardanelles and in Egypt, and France in the Levant. Grey approved of French control on the Syrian coast up to Alexandretta as a wise measure to seal Mediterranean cooperation. And, in a meeting with Delcassé in London on 9 February, Grey acknowledged the French claim, as yet only generally stated, to a predominant interest in Syria and Alexandretta.[17]

As January drew to a close, the War Council stood solidly behind the Dardanelles operation. The unsuccessful Turkish attack on the Suez Canal early in February only served to strengthen the belief in London that Turkey was ready to collapse. But in all the discussion of alternatives little consideration was given by the cabinet to the long term effects of a Turkish defeat. Herbert Samuel, President of the Local Government Board, had recommended annexation of Palestine to the British Empire. He believed that such a move would provide Britain with an opportunity to alleviate Turkish misrule and lend support to a great

mission to restore a homeland to the Jews. Two of his arguments focused on Britain's post-war needs. Public opinion would demand compensation for the war effort. Samuel saw compensation in Mesopotamia and Palestine as more likely to offer the prospect of post-war peace than acquisition of Germany's African colonies. And, control of Palestine would provide "an admirable strategic frontier for Egypt."[18]

Grey certainly knew that changes were in the offing. During their meeting early in February, he also told Delcassé that though it appeared wise not to discourage a movement to overthrow the Committee of Union and Progress in Turkey, peace conditions would not be allowed to "qualify what [he had] said to [the Russian] Minister of Foreign Affairs about Constantinople and the Straits after Turkey attacked Russia in October."[19]

The Dardanelles operation, which was begun on a limited basis with a bombardment of the outer forts on 19 February, undoubtedly contributed to the early recrudescence of the issue of the Straits, which in November Grey had tried to lay to rest until the end of the war. The failure of the first naval bombardment convinced Kitchener, against his previous hope but in accordance with his original judgement on 7 January, that the army would have to help see the business through.[20] However, a full scale operation with the possibility of Greek aid risked a rift in Anglo-Russian relations. Sazonov has recorded how "painfully" he regarded the prospect of an allied assault on Gallipoli. He continued to be particularly touchy about Greece's involvement as likely to lead her to make awkward claims in Asia Minor.[21] In addition, Russian military reverses were unsettling. Late in February, Sazonov moved to formalize the Western promises received in November by presenting Russian conditions in case Turkey sued for peace.[22] Reports from Buchanan had already

indicated that Russia would be seeking some further clarification with regard to Constantinople and the Straits. In the House of Commons, Grey reiterated Britain's sympathy with Russia's desire for unfettered egress from the Black Sea.[23] The War Council then took the matter up. Grey expressed his strong doubts to his colleagues that he could stall the Russians. Churchill preferred to keep the discussion to one of general principles, not yet being sure what the wise move was, while Crewe remarked that it would be "quite impossible" to settle the question during the war. Apparently completely unaware of Russian feelings, Kitchener suggested giving the Gallipoli peninsula to Greece.[24] The next day Sazonov requested a formal agreement on Russia's claim to Constantinople, corridors of territory from the Bosphorus to the Dardanelles on the European and Asiatic shores, and the Turkish islands in the sea of Marmora.[25] Over the next two days, Buchanan reported the firm determination in Petrograd behind the Foreign Minister's request. At one stage, Sazonov had even threatened to resign if some satisfactory solution were not reached, a ploy which had great effect on Grey, who considered Sazonov's solidarity with the Allies a valuable asset.[26]

On 10 March, the War Council met again to discuss the Russian request, this time with Lord Landsdowne and Bonar Law in attendance as representatives of the opposition party in Parliament. Grey again made it clear that Britain could not postpone the issue any longer. In the discussion that followed, both Lloyd George and Churchill stressed the need to resolve the question to avoid friction among the Allies. Bonar Law advised making the agreement conditional on Britain and France settling their claims, to which Grey agreed, adding that the whole point was to bring the war to a successful end. As to British requirements, no comprehensive discussion took place. Kitchener proposed acquisition of

Alexandretta, but not Palestine, which he claimed "would be of no value to us whatsoever." He believed that Alexandretta was vital to Britain as a natural terminus of any rail line linking the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf, and envisioned the British presence there as a necessary extension of Egyptian defences, if Russia were in Constantinople, France in Syria, and Italy in Rhodes. Fisher supported Kitchener's views, mentioning transport of oil from Mesopotamia and Persia. Grey finally intervened to suggest four conditions to the agreement: that it be kept secret to avoid alienating the Balkan countries, that there be free passage of the Straits, that Constantinople be a free port, and that Arabia and the Holy Places remain in Muslim hands. Asquith advised Grey to remind the Russians of Britain's great sacrifice in agreeing to such a change in the status of Constantinople and the Straits.[27]

As in Britain, so in France did opposition to Russian designs cave in. On 11 March, after a sleepless night, Delcassé gave in to the persuasive logic of Allied unity. Indeed, Sir Francis Bertie, British ambassador in Paris, described Delcassé as "dazed like a rabbit when hunted by a weasel," when he was confronted by reports of German offers to detach Russia from her allies.[28] Like Grey, he would not risk estranging Russia for the sake of the lesser prospect of Greek aid.

On 12 March, Britain formally agreed to the proposal, subject to an Allied victory in the war "and to the desiderata of Great Britain and France in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere being realised.'" In an accompanying memorandum, Grey stressed Britain's sacrifice, as Asquith had suggested he do, and asked that Russia observe the other stipulations he had outlined to the War Council. Of his own accord, Grey added one more condition. He asked that as an immediate quid pro quo Russia agree to a revision of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 by making the neutral

sphere in Persia a British sphere.[29]

Clearly motivated by a desire to keep Russia in the war, the Constantinople Agreement also revealed the thrust of Britain's Arab policy to her allies, and her concern to strengthen her position in Persia. The added complication was that now settlement of French claims could hardly be deferred. Almost immediately the French claimed "Syria together with the Gulf of Alexandretta and Cilicia up to the Taurus [mountain] range."[30] The French claim for Syria, in which it was apparently the intention to include Palestine,[31] caused some alarm in London. Clerk believed that French compensation for the war might best be found outside Turkey, and Nicolson registered his preference for spheres of influence over wholesale partition.[32] Before officially approving the Constantinople Agreement, the French tried and failed to obtain Russian agreement to their claims. Buchanan reported "somewhat heated" negotiations had taken place between Sazonov and Paléologue.[33] For his part, Grey was unwilling to discuss Syria and Mesopotamia with the French until the issue of an independent Muslim state was decided. Moreover, Asquith has recorded that he and Grey had serious misgivings about undertaking a wholesale partition in Asiatic Turkey.[34] So far, Britain had merely sounded out Arab opinion by contacting Husayn. In wanting first to settle the question of a Muslim state, Grey undoubtedly kept in mind Britain's special relationship with Muslims in India and Egypt. In view of his prejudice against British expansion in the Middle East and his concern to observe French interests, Grey can hardly be accused of using the Arab issue to forestall French claims or win more territory for Britain. The value of the Arabs as a cushion against a radical Middle Eastern settlement is not so easily dismissed. Spheres of influence worked best with amenable clients. The

delicate problem was to satisfy a present ally and not prejudice local inhabitants and potential allies or Middle Eastern clients.

At the War Council on 19 March, the day after the launching of the third attempt to breach the Dardanelles, Grey made a stab at reaching some sort of a consensus as to British requirements in the Middle East. He proposed two questions for debate: whether the acquisition of fresh territory would weaken or strengthen Britain, and whether she ought not support a political as well as a religious Muslim entity in the Middle East. Before Britain could enter discussions with France she had to make up her mind about these questions. His colleagues offered little in the way of advice. Crewe registered the strong views of the India Office for the annexation of Basra. Churchill merely said that he could not conceive leaving "inefficient and out-of-date" Turkey in control in the Middle East. Asquith said that he disliked the acquisition of new territory as much as the foreign secretary, but he believed Britain would be derelict in her duty in leaving other nations to scramble for Turkey. In conclusion the meeting decided that Britain's first requirement, after Constantinople had been captured, would be the establishment of a Muslim political entity in Arabia, though what else she would require was an open question. Until matters became more clear, further discussions of the partition of Turkey were considered premature.[35]

While still withholding official agreement to Russian acquisition of Constantinople, not given until 10 April, the French turned their attention to London, where Ambassador Paul Cambon proposed that he and Grey open discussions on an unofficial level.[36] Such discussion does not appear to have progressed very far before Grey retired to his country retreat to rest his eyes at the end of March. Moreover, he was busy during

March trying to complete negotiations for the intervention of Italy. Five months later, he informed Bertie that the subject of British and French desiderata "remains for discussion, and no discussions have taken place since Italy entered the war."[37] In those five months, there was ample evidence, on the score of interdepartmental haggling alone, to justify the reluctance of Grey and Asquith to open the Middle Eastern can of worms - and this before either the Arab or French negotiations had begun in earnest.

Not all British officials shared the reticence of the prime minister and the foreign secretary. In March, Samuel, supported by Lloyd George, who wished to forestall France permanently in the Middle East, made a second pitch for British acquisition of Palestine. Grey squashed the idea. Elsewhere, opinion in the War Office and the Admiralty, Crewe reported to Hardinge, favoured "a strong position on the flank of our direct road to the East."[38] But, reluctant or not, British ministers and officials had to face a complete collapse of the pre-war modus vivendi in the Middle East. Russian control of Constantinople and the Straits would upset the pre-war balance in the Mediterranean. Worried before the war about its vulnerablity to a Franco-Russian combination in the Mediterranean, the Admiralty now argued that Britain and France would have "to act in tandem to balance Russia in the area." But all too often the military authorities, of which Kitchener himself was the outstanding example, tended to expect the French would ultimately be reasonable in their demands.[39]

On the contrary, France evidently regarded the further partition of Asiatic Turkey as something other than a happy, cooperative Anglo-French venture. The Gallipoli campaign and the Constantinople Agreement alerted Britain's closest ally, if not the world, to the fact that the days

of the Ottoman Empire were numbered. It was perhaps a forlorn hope that the issue could be put off until the end of the war. That was certainly Lloyd George's view, for he never tired of expressing his conviction that division of the spoils during the war would reduce friction among the Allies after the war.[40] Even Kitchener had come around to the view that "partition will doubtless have to be undertaken," and, therefore, stepped up his campaign for British acquisition of Alexandretta.[41]

Both Italy and Greece were also demanding a part in any partition. The secret agreement of 26 April 1915 which brought Italy into the Allied camp promised the Italians "a just share of the Mediterranean region adjacent to the province of Adalia" in Anatolia, if there were future partition of Asiatic Turkey.[42] Also in April, Venizelos offered Greek assistance at Gallipoli in exchange for territorial concessions to Greece in Asia Minor. The bargain was judged a poor one in London, for Venizelos' claim was large and the Greek intention apparently to attack Bulgaria, which would have ruined a Balkan combination.[43]

The whole question of an Arab political entity also posed problems. The Indian government continued to cultivate Ibn Sa'ud and to pursue good relations with the Amir of Asir and the Amir of Yemen in the southern Arabian peninsula.[44] In spite of his office's reservations about the handling of Arab affairs from Cairo, Sir Frederick Arthur Hirtzel, Secretary of the Political and Secret Department at the India Office, could still envision a "British protectorate over half the Syrian wilderness and the whole of Arabia", by which he meant "nothing more than Arabia for the Arabs under the aegis of Britain." Finding such a comfortable notion of Arab malleability in one so otherwise knowledgeable as Hirtzel only lends support to the suspicion that British officials were frequently woefully ignorant of Middle Eastern politics and geography.[45] Essentially, Arabia was at this

time regarded by most British officials as a vast and virtually empty territory linking Egypt and the Persian Gulf, peopled only by a few wandering bedouin, whom they frequently did not distinguish from more settled Arab societies. As Barrow put it, "Mesopotamia and Egypt, with Palestine as the connecting link between the two, are British interests, the rest are not." He favoured the rehabilitation of Turkey in Asia Minor. Russia could administer in Armenia and France in Lebanon.[46] The Viceroy still recommended the permanent occupation of the vilayet of Basra, but regarded the question of Arabia as better left alone to settle itself.[47] Nicolson regarded partition as "a most stupendous task" and a possible source of friction among the powers taking part. He confessed himself a partisan of maintainence of Turkey in Asia.[48] Officials like Nicolson who had long experience with Turkish affairs found it more difficult to break the pattern of pre-war modes of thinking. It had been long accepted that Turkish collapse and partition in Asia would lead to strife among the European successors to the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's choice to side with Germany in 1914 and the Constantinople Agreement in 1915 were the first two steps in the destruction of the psychology behind the maintenance of Ottoman integrity in Asia. In an effort to determine how much farther it was wise to go, the very question posed by Grey at the War Council on 19 March, the determination of British desiderata was sent to committee in April 1915.[49]

The committee was directed "to consider the nature of British desiderata in Turkey in Asia in the event of a successful conclusion of the war" and pay special interest to departmental memoranda. The chairman, after whom the report is usually named, was Maurice de Bunsen, until 1914 British ambassador in Vienna. Clerk represented the Foreign Office, T.W. Holderness (Undersecretary of State) the India Office, Admiral Sir H.B.

Jackson the Admiralty, Major-General C.E. Callwell and Sir Mark Sykes, who was specially chosen by Kitchener, the War Office, and Sir H. Llewellyn Smith the Board of Trade. The ubiquitous Hankey, with two aides, acted as secretary. Sykes quickly became the dominant figure on the committee, though the final report shows the hand of a non-member of the committee, Hirtzel, who presented a long memorandum on behalf of the India office.[50]

The committee's final report, tendered on 30 June 1915, defined British desiderata in general terms and proposed four possible schemes to implement them, though it granted that it was "very difficult to lay down how to shape the opportunity for obtaining them." The committee disapproved of any scheme of protectorates as likely to induce rivalry among the powers and produce the "clash and confusion" of different administrations. In the same way, internationalization was deemed "a desperate remedy" that would "invite disaster."[51] In its conclusion the committee favoured zones of interest over partition, and emphasized the need to create a stable modus vivendi in the Middle East that would secure British interests while providing "some prospect of a permanent existence for Turkey in Asia."[52] In all, the committee provided choices rather than answers, though it did give some definition to British requirements.

As to Britsh desiderata, any settlement had to secure her "special and supreme position in the Persian Gulf," safeguard British trade, fulfill the pledges given to the various Arab chieftains, give a field for development of the oil, river navigation, irrigation and colonization potential of Mesopotamia, solve the Armenian problem and guarantee Christian and Muslim rights in the Holy Places of the Middle East.

The first of the four proposed solutions involved a partition of Asiatic Turkey that would reduce Turkish sovereignty to an Anatolian kingdom. The second envisaged zones of political and commercial interest and limited partition. The third would maintain the Ottoman Empire as before the war, with "certain necessary territorial exceptions." The fourth scheme proposed a decentralization of the Ottoman Empire on the federal principle.[53]

The committee favoured a scheme of devolution first proposed by Sykes that would divide the Ottoman Empire into five provinces: Anatolia, Armenia, Syria, Palestine, and Irak. The Arabian peninsula required special treatment. The committee suggested that the terms of peace contain "a measure of devolution which would satisfy the aspirations of the Arabs and Armenians to have a voice in the administration of their immediate affairs, and at the same time end the dangers of centralization."[54] Such a scheme would be in consonance with the avowed aims of the Allies. As for Basra, Britain would require safeguards for her interests, subject to the approval of the Indian government. Against the scheme were the chances of obtaining Allied agreement and the difficulty of getting a new system started.

The decentralization scheme owed much to the long-standing British encouragement of reform in the Ottoman Empire. The committee exhorted the government to seize the opportunity to release "the vampire hold of the metropolis" (a phrase very much to Sykes' taste) and give the provinces field to develop on their own. With Russia in Constantinople, there would be an opportunity to set up a new government in a new capital. In June 1915, it still seemed possible to administer a knockout blow to Turkey. The decentralization scheme was one possible blueprint to avoid wholesale partition following Turkish defeat. Finally,

the scheme revealed a certain anti-French bias. Though Russia would annex Constantinople as by the recent agreement, Greece would perhaps occupy the Turkish Islands in the Aegean and Smyrna and its environs, and Britain would annex Basra, France was shut off from any gains of territory in the Middle East.

The third scheme, which maintained Turkey as before the war but subject to the same Russian, British and possible Greek annexations as in the devolution scheme, had "nothing to recommend it beyond its deceptive appearance of simplicity." Russia would dominate a weak Turkey, and Turkey would become "a financial vassal of France." The first scheme based on outright annexation and the second scheme based on zones of interest had similar territorial outlines, but the committee favoured neither scheme and argued that zones of interest might eventually become annexed anyway.[55] So, it was in the plan for partition that the committee made its most probing investigation.

The first problem was to decide the limits of British direct control in Mesopotamia. The committee accepted Hirtzel's argument that Basra was untenable without Baghdad and rejected the Viceroy's contention that a protectorate over Baghdad would be sufficient.[56] For three reasons, the committee settled on a northerly extension of the British zone to the line of hills north of Mosul. The hills provided a natural line of defence, the territory thus annexed contained valuable oil wells on the Turco-Persian frontier, and the trade of Basra would decline if Baghdad were held by another power.[57]

The second problem was to choose a port on the eastern Mediterranean, a requirement deemed necessary for the future transfer of troops to British-occupied Mesopotamia. The choice came down to one of Alexandretta versus Haifa. The committee recommended decisively in

favour of Haifa, despite Kitchener's objections, which Sykes seems to have overcome in talks with the war lord.[58] Aside from the difficulty of wresting Alexandretta from the French, control of a slice of territory between a Russian sphere in Armenia and a French sphere in Syria ruined the concept of a French buffer of territory between the Russian and British zones, a concept, it might be added, Hirtzel described in withering terms as outdated. The committee concluded that Britain had a special interest in the territory "south of the line Haifa-Tadmar-Sinjar-Zakhu-Amadia-Rowandiz," and recommended that Britain annex the vilayets of Baghdad and Basra, with Haifa to serve as a British enclave protecting the port and terminus of rail connections with Mesopotamia.[59]

The committee also worked on the principle that any British zone, whether protectorate or annexation, be virtually self-contained. Mistrust of French financial interests lead to a recommendation that Brtish trade have a clear field in its zone.[60] The self-contained trade zone and the concept of a buffer were attempts to cope with the very real possibility that British commitments in the Middle East would get out of hand. Though the committee preferred to avoid a scramble for spoils, it recognized that Britain would be best situated financially, militarily and diplomatically if properly insulated against foreign encroachment. On theses grounds. Sykes argued in favour of partition. In his view, by defining boundaries "we stand square with our Allies, with instruments we can adhere to, boundaries we can see, and interests we can respect...."[61]

Taken as a whole, the report illustrates the dilemma involved in trying to avoid both partition and instability in the Middle East. The de Bunsen committee had been struck to decide British requirements, to act, in Sykes' phrase, as "a first diplomatic clearing." Because Sykes

himself was later to occupy a central role in the forging of partition, the committee's work probably had a tangible relationship to the final settlement among the three Allies taking part in the 1916 agreement, but the government itself never used the report as the basis for further discussions of Britain's future policy in the Middle East. The new policy was being formulated at lower levels. When events soon eroded the assumption that changes could be postponed until they could be deliberated at the end of the war, these formulations in the making perforce had to serve as the basis for British negotiations. The de Bunsen committee itself had not had to take into account either the effect of the demands of Britain's allies, present and potential, though those demands were guessed at, or the effect of continued, even increased, military frustration in the Middle East. While the committee was sitting over thirty thousand men landed at Gallipoli on 25 April. The Turks did not collapse, which left the Balkan countries unmoved. By the time the committee tendered its report, victory at Gallipoli appeared far more difficult to bring about than it had to the optimists who so heartily endorsed the campaign in January 1915. At any rate, a cheap victory was nowhere in sight.

CHAPTER IV

Searching for an Arab Policy: the Dealings with Sharif Husayn, July-December 1915

On 14 April 1915, Grey instructed Sir Henry McMahon, Commissioner in Egypt, to inform the Arabs of the Hijaz through Wingate in the Sudan that Britain would make it "an essential condition in any terms of peace that the Arabian Peninsula and its Muslim Holy Places should remain in the hands of an independent Sovereign Muslim State." McMahon was instructed to avoid discussion of boundaries and to leave the question of an Arab Caliphate to Muslims to decide.[1] Wingate used Seyid Sir Ali Morghani, who had contact with Husayn, to pass on the message, in which it was stated that Britain would not annex "one foot of land" in the Arabian peninsula, or suffer any other power to do so.[2] In a further effort to spread word of British intentions, an unsigned leaflet was distributed in the Hijaz, a move which Nicolson curtly described as "not a happy production."[3] From India, Hardinge objected that the term Arabian peninsula was "open to serious misinterpretation and might be held to our hands in Oman and even to indicate intention to withdraw from Aden."[4] Objections such as these only grew with time, yet Grey, prodded by Kitchener and his various associates in London and Egypt, continued to favour encouraging Husayn. For the rest of 1915, contacts with the Sharif and interest in raising Arab allies grew in proportion to British military failure in the Middle East. As the internal debate revolving around the stature of Husayn and the value of his support deepened, and as military efforts at Gallipoli and in Mesopotamia turned sour, Britain had also to address the pending matter of an Anglo-French settlement of claims. As it

turned out, Britain's stance in dealing with the Arabs greatly affected her negotiations with France.

British approaches to the Arabs were very much an attempt to come to grips with the real or imaginary mysteries of what Hankey described as "Oriental psychology."[5] Some, like Lord Curzon, a former Viceroy, who disparaged Husayn, rejected any idea of an independent Arab state in the Middle East.[6] Without a clear figure around whom Arabs could rally, without a capital and focal point for the new state and without some assurance of Turkish defeat, they deemed it better to avoid making commitments.[7] Early in 1915 that view predominated in the Foreign Office as much as among Indian and India Office officials. Nicolson was notably cool, and Grey himself merely hoped to counteract Ottoman propaganda, stem the drift of Arabs into the Ottoman army, and keep contacts open.

The prospect of defeat at Gallipoli began to change the prevailing coolness towards an Arab movement. Though he did not draw the conclusion that the remedy was British support of the Arabs, Hardinge recognized that a British defeat would enhance Ottoman prestige, "and Pan-Islamism would become a very serious danger."[8] But that was exactly the conclusion being reached in Cairo and Khartoum. Sympathy for the Arab and a desire to latch on to a counterbalance to Turkish pan-Islamism led Wingate to envision "a future federation ... under European guidance and supervision, linked together by racial and linguistic bonds, owing spiritual allegiance to a single Arab Primate, and looking to Great Britain as its patron and protector."[9] The aim, as Clayton later remarked, was to preserve Arabia as before the war, "but minus the Turk. In this way we shall have an open field to work in."[10]

All the assiduous encouragement from Cairo and Khartoum finally moved Husayn. In a letter from Abdullah sent from Mecca on 14 July

1915, the Sharif communicated the terms under which "the entire Arab nation," for whom he presumed to speak, would enter into a defensive alliance with Britain. For an independent Arab state, he claimed a vast territory extending from Persia on the east to the Red Sea on the west and from the Indian Ocean on the south northwards to a line running from Mersina in the west to Amadia on the Persian frontier.[11] He asked Britain to agree to the proclamation of an Arab Caliphate, and undertook, "other things being equal, to grant Great Britain preference in all economic enterprises in the Arab countries."[12]

McMahon proposed a reply which would affirm the "friendly sentiments" of Lord Kitchener's message of November 1914 but which deferred discussion of boundaries until the end of the war. He also recommended reminding the Sharif of the many Arabs who were fighting with Turkey against Britain.[13] In London, the Foreign Office and India Office consulted as to the proper reply. The India Office regarded the Sharif's demands as totally unacceptable as they stood, and probably incompatible with Britain's other undertakings in the Arab world. Crewe's successor at the India Office, Austin Chamberlain, doubted that McMahon's general and unencouraging reply would bring the Arabs to arms. It might even, he thought, put them off.[14] But Chamberlain concurred with McMahon's proposed reply, only making the suggestion, which was taken up by Grey and transmitted to Egypt, that the Sharif send his son Abdullah to Egypt to discuss "a preliminary agreement for securing the independence, rights and privileges of the Sheriffate."[15] Grey also reiterated Britain's willingness to see the investiture of the Muslim Caliphate in an Arab.

In his first note to Husayn, McMahon did not suggest a meeting with Abdullah, but in other ways faithfully presented the position agreed

on in London.[16] As yet, there was no haste to encourage Husayn to believe an agreement as to boundaries could be made during the war. The enticement of an Arab Caliphate and pledges of British good faith did not move the Sharif, for it was boundaries and more solid political guarantees that he sought. Husayn quickly replied, noting British "lukewarmth and hesitancy," but backed down not one square mile in his claim for the Arab people.[17]. But Britain did not remain lukewarm, even disdainful.[18] The reasons for the British change of heart may be traced to events in Europe, at Gallipoli and in Mesopotamia, and to the timely defection of an Arab officer in the Turkish army whose persuasive powers found sympathetic ears in Cairo.

The last six months of 1915 saw an almost unbroken string of Allied defeats in the military field. By mid-August, the Russians had lost Poland and three quarters of a million men. Only subsequent German hesitancy to push on boldly seems to have saved the Russian army.[19] In September, the Franco-British attempt to come to Russia's aid by attacking in Champagne and Artois failed at the cost of a quarter of a million troops. In the Middle East, another, this the last, failure to breach the Turkish lines at Gallipoli pushed the British government towards evacuation. The attack against Gaba Tepe and Suvla, launched on 6 August, achieved surprise, but was carried off poorly. At the end of the month, the Dardanelles Committee, successor to the War Council with the change of government in May, could only conclude that "no line of future policy could be framed for the present."[20] Though the decision to withdraw from Gallipoli was not made until November, opinion in the government leaned that way throughout the autumn, the major obstacle being Kitchener's stubborn opposition to evacuation.[21]

The prospect of total failure at the Dardanelles had two immediate effects. It would, as Hankey argued in September, completely undermine British policy in the Balkans.[22] In addition, the Central Powers were gearing to make an attack on the Serbs, who had been much neglected by the Allies until the eleventh hour. A Serbian defeat would be a powerful inducement to Bulgaria to join the Central Powers. A supply route from Germany to Turkey would be opened, with a consequent erosion in the Allies' military position and prestige.

Grey's reaction to the worsening Balkan outlook approached something close to panic. On 23 September, he told the Dardanelles Committee that if troops to aid the Serbs were delayed, "even for forty-eight hours, the situation might become irreparable." He urged the quick despatch of a Franco-British force to Salonica, a project held in abeyance by the offensive in France. He hoped that such action would prompt Greece and Rumania to mobilize for the Allies.[23] The Austro-German attack on Serbia, which began on 6 October, brought in Bulgaria against the Serbian flank. The Serbian army escaped to Albania and thence to Corfu, later to join at Salonica the Allied army which had arrived too late to help and which was not evacuated so as not further to discourage Rumania and Greece.

The failure at Gallipoli was also felt further east. British prestige in the whole area was at a low ebb. The response of the government was to consider an attack on Baghdad as a counterstroke to failure elsewhere. It was "a gamble worth trying."[24] Grey predicted that, without Baghdad, Persia would almost certainly fall into the German orbit. But, as Churchill made clear to Balfour, it was not necessary to protect Persian oil supplies. No oil was coming from Persia.

Once again, as in 1914, the reasons for advance in Mesopotamia were political.[25]

The discouraging turn of military fortunes coincided with intelligence from Cairo that Arabs in the Ottoman army who were members of the Syrian-based Young Arab secret society, al 'Ahd (the Covenant), were prepared to break with the Turks and deal with Britain. The bearer of this astounding intelligence, one Lieutenant Muhammed Sharif al-Faruqui, stressed the need for decisive action before the Arabs accepted a counter-offer for Arab autonomy, a story which appears to have no foundation.[26] Faruqui spoke at length several times with Clayton in Cairo during the second week in October. Clayton, and through him McMahon, were certainly greatly impressed with Faruqui's revelations. The High Commissioner then strove to impress upon Grey the urgency of assuring the Arabs (in effect Husayn, with whom Faruqui communicated) of British good faith. Grey was in an urgent frame of mind as it was. After consulting with Kitchener and Chamberlain on the night of 20 October, Grey cabled McMahon the instructions on which the latter based his famous letter to Husayn outlining boundaries for the Arab state acceptable to Britain.[27]

The next day at the Dardanelles Committee, Grey argued that the "critical moment" in the Arab negotiations had arrived. He reported his telegram to McMahon, and offered the personal opinion that "the offer of Baghdad might decide" the Arabs.[28] He said that Britain had no objection to the inclusion of Baghdad in the boundaries of an independent Arab state, advised undertaking the advance in Mesopotamia to restore British prestige and add weight to negotiations with Husayn, and seemed unperturbed by Kitchener's pessimistic view that the Arabs would not budge until they saw which way the war would go, just the kind of logic Grey was normally addicted to. The Foreign Secretary's

easy concession of Baghdad was curious for he had, on the advice of the India Office, advised McMahon that the "proposed sphere of British control, namely, Basra Vilayet, will need extension in view of our special interests in Baghdad province and area actually in our occupation." What construction Grey put on the word "control" is not clear, but it is evident that, if necessary as a bargaining point, he was prepared to include Baghdad and its environs within the boundaries of an Arab state, and McMahon, who received much criticism for it, so took him to mean.[29]

In his instructions, which were approved by Kitchener, Grey gave McMahon'discretion to proceed without further reference to London.[30] Drawing on the discussions with Faruqui and interpreting Grey's instructions as best he could, McMahon laid out British conditions in his letter of 24 October 1915. He made three modifications of the terms laid out in Abdullah's letter of 14 July. First, with regard to Syria, he stated that

> the Districts of Mersin and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, cannot be said to be purely Arab, and must on that account be excepted from the proposed delimitation.

Second, he made it clear that the delimitation of boundaries must not conflict with Britain's treaties with other Arab chiefs or with her commitments to her ally, France.[31]

On the score of French interests, Grey had cautioned McMahon to avoid discussing the question of British advisors or British guidance for fear of giving the impression that Britain was "not only endeavouring to secure Arab interests but to establish [her] own in Syria at [the] expense [of the] French."[32] As Clerk saw the problem when examining McMahon's proposals, "the position must be clearly understood from both the French and Arab side from the outset, or we shall be heading straight

for serious trouble." But he and Nicolson, who pronounced the whole idea of an independent Arab state to be a "fantastic dream," did not press their misgivings in the rush of events.[33]

McMahon seems to have rather more badly twisted Grey's instructions with regard to Mesopotamia. He told Husayn that

> as regards the two vilayets of Baghdad and Basra, the Arabs recognise the fact of Great Britain's established position and interests there all call for the setting up of special measures of administrative control to protect those regions from foreign agression, to promote the welfare of the local populations and to safeguard our mutual economic interests.[34]

The logical conclusion, which Hardinge and Indian Office officials immediately drew, was that Baghdad, which Grey had been prepared to sacrifice, and Basra, which he had not, were included within the boundaries of an independent Arab state. After the war, the words in the passage just quoted, which did not correspond in the various translations to and from Arabic, became the source of bitter controversy. If Grey had been imprecise, McMahon had been more so. What did the words "administrative control" mean, annexation or protectorate?

Moreover, McMahon seems to have been labouring under a curious notion of the meaning of the word "independence" as used in his letter. He had assured Husayn that, subject to the reservations he made, "Britain is prepared to recognise and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all regions lying within the boundaries proposed by the Sharif."[35] Five months earlier, he defended the use of the word in the proclamation distributed in the Hijaz. He said that he regarded the "term 'independent sovereign state' in a generic [by which he seems to have meant merely, general] sense because the idea of an Arabian unity under one ruler recognized as supreme by other Arab chiefs is yet inconceivable to the

Arab mind."[36] In a later letter of 14 December, McMahon assured the Sharif of Britain's desire to make a peace "of which the freedom of the Arab peoples and liberation from German and Turkish domination" was an essential condition. It was in the sense of liberation from Turkish overlordship that McMahon interpreted Arab "independence", which was close to Clayton's conception of Arabia as before the war but "minus the Turks." But why enter into negotiations for the settling of boundaries for a state one believed could not exist? McMahon and his advisors in Cairo, particularly, Kedourie has suggested, Storrs, seem to have believed that Husayn would be easily duped and so practiced a species of studied vagueness the effects of which were anything but benign.[38]

In his letter of 24 October, McMahon also made it clear that "active measures" by the Arabs would determine "the permanence and strength" of the agreement. Pressed by Hardinge and the India Office, Grey then instructed McMahon to make the point that the Arabs would have to fulfill their part of the bargain, which McMahon did in his next letter.[39] There was little use looking for escape hatches. The damage was done. Husayn replied that he understood the bargain, and "it removed that which made [him] uneasy."[40] Indeed, it was the British who were becoming uneasy. Grey did not get the immediate Arab support he desired, for his whole object had been "not to secure a new sphere of British influence, but to get the Arabs on our side against [the] Turks."[41] By January 1916, all the Foreign Secretary could do was moan that "this Arab business is a regular quicksand."[42]

The problems in bringing the Arabs into the fight were compounded by the turn of British fortunes in Mesopotamia. After the Turks stopped

the British advance on Baghdad in December, General Townshend's force retired to Kut where it held out stubbornly until forced to surrender on 29 April 1916. In December 1915 and early January 1916, the successful evacuation at Gallipoli was undertaken. Everywhere in the Middle East British initiatives had been thwarted. If anything, the reverses proved that military defeat would not necessarily lead to civilian uprisings among Muslims in the East. Fears of a Jihad appeared to have been as exaggerated as was the value of Arab support. Indeed, in fending off Indian objections to the sacrifice of Basra, Grey remarked to Chamberlain that "the whole thing was a castle in the air which would never materialize."[43] McMahon had himself argued in defence of his actions that he had been asked to proceed with haste in a nebulous situation.[44] That negotiations with Husayn dragged on inconclusively, that they had no force of law, that the Arabs were expected to do their part as quid pro quo, and that French interests had to be taken into account were little reassurance to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India. At the very least, it is curious to see the very officials who so soon before had been stressing the vital importance of the Arabs to the British cause now stating that the whole affair did not matter at all. Ironically, the very vagueness of McMahon's undertakings to the Sharif actually made it easier to settle Middle Eastern questions with France.[45] It would only be later that Husayn and his sons would turn that ambiguity to their advantage.

CHAPTER V

Negotiating an Agreement, November 1915-April 1916

McMahon's letter to Husayn of 24 October 1915 made it difficult to delay a settlement in the Middle East with France. Though the French had not been informed of the details of Britain's dealings with Husayn, they had for some months been suspicious of British activities. At the end of August 1915, Cambon had accused Britain of stirring anti-French agitation in the Egyptian press or, at the least, of not preventing it by censorship. He reminded the Foreign Office of Grey's accord with Delcassé in February with regard to Syria and Cilicia, where, he said, France possessed "une zone reservé où ses interêts ne souffrent pas de partage."[1] The French claim for all of Syria and Cilicia patently conflicted with McMahon's assurances to the Sharif about the districts of Damascus, Hama, Homs and Aleppo,[2] which comprised the Syrian hinterland and which left France the Syrian littoral (or roughly the Ottoman vilayet of Beirut) and Cilicia.

On 6 November, Grey informed McMahon that the French expert requested on 21 October was expected in London the next week to discuss the boundaries of an independent Arab state. His aim was straightforward: "I propose to concentrate on getting French consent to inclusion of Damascus, Hama, Homs and Aleppo in Arab boundaries." To that end, he predicted Britain would have to be prepared to "sacrifice provision that Arabs are to seek the advice and guidance of Great Britain only."[3] McMahon saw no great difficulty, and told Grey that his assurances to the Sharif applied only "to that part of Arabia where Britain is free to act without reference to

France."[4]

On 10 November, Grey told Cambon that Britain was willing to include Basra and Baghdad in the Arab state. He hoped the French would show an equally large spirit. Cambon reiterated that "France regarded Syria as a dependency." As for Basra and Baghdad, he expected they would come under British influence whatever the arrangement with the Arabs. The French ambassador offered the opinion that "there had been far too much talk in Cairo,"[5] presumably an indication that Grey had referred, at least generally, to McMahon's approaches to Husayn.

As special delegate for the talks the French chose François Georges-Picot, in 1915 first secretary at the French embassy in London and formerly consul-general in Beirut. Since 23 October he had been in Paris preparing for the negotiations. On the British side, Nicolson presided at an interdepartmental committee on the Arab question, at which it was decided to inform Picot that if the Arabs were not detached from the Turks, which was Britain's "sole object," trouble would spread from Egypt and the Sudan to all of North Africa.[6]

When Picot met the Nicolson committee on 23 November, he opened by claiming that "no French government would stand for a day which made any surrender of French claims,"[7] no doubt a pointed reference to the power of the vocal interest groups in France with Syrian financial and commercial connections, and to French associations with Syrian Christians.[8] The French had no intention of restricting their claims in Syria, which, as Picot outlined it, comprised the territory included within the borders defined by a line from a point where the Taurus mountains approached the sea in Cilicia, following the Taurus to include Diyarbakir, Mosul and Kirkuk, and then to Dayr-az-Zawr on the Euphrates, and from there southwards along the

desert border to the frontier of Egypt. Grey's ploy of raising the spectre of North African troubles palled on Picot, but France would agree "to throw Mosul into the Arab pool if [Britain] did so in the case of Baghdad."[9] Evidently, France did not especially value the known oilfields around Mosul, and neither did the British for they were ready to include the area in the prospective French zone.

One other tactic also failed. From Cairo, where he was on the last leg of his Middle Eastern and Indian junket to explain the de Bunsen deliberations, Sykes reported that Faruqui had indicated Arab willingness to grant France a monopoly of concessions, recognition of her educational establishments and priority as European advisors in Syria, Palestine and in the southwest as far as Ma'an.[10] Picot was unmoved by this Arab offer, as well he might given Faruqui's total lack of authority, and he remained unrelenting even when Nicolson pointed out that France would obtain a virtual protectorate in Syria. At the close of the meeting, Cambon complained of the poor reception accorded Picot. The French delegate then returned to consult the Quai D'Orsay.[11]

Grey received news of the deadlock with the weary remark that "the Arabs will never be gained by promises without action."[12] But the prospect of further action in the Middle East was remote. By 2 December, General Townshend and his force had retreated from Ctesiphon to Kut. At the War Committee, on the same day as the meeting with Picot, it was decided to evacuate Gallipoli. The General Staff argued that the debate over whether or not to evacuate boiled down to "conjecture as to the effect in the East" and "questions of imperial and military sentiment" versus "solid calculations of military strategy." The day of military expeditions hastily got up for diplomatic purposes was rapidly waning in the Middle East. By the end of

the year, the new Chief of the General Staff, Sir William Robertson, had exacted a commitment from the War Committee to treat the Western Front as a first priority for British military efforts.[13]

There remained the problem of what to do with the French. Clearly nothing could be done in Arabia until France had been satisfied that her interests would be protected. In early December, Clerk, who exclaimed that Picot had been selected "for his very fanaticism," suggested calling Sykes into the negotiations, for he understood and showed sympathy for the French position in Syria. A report of the negotiations was sent to Asquith, who then invited Sykes to the next meeting of the War Committee.[14]

Sir Mark Sykes had travelled widely in the Near East while he was in his twenties, and had published four books about his travels and experiences, the last, The Caliph's Last Heritage, in 1915. A Roman Catholic who had received part of his education among Jesuits in Monaco and Brussels, Sykes also spoke fluent French. From 1905 to 1907 he had been honorary attaché at the British embassy in Constantinople. In 1911, he was returned to the House of Commons as Conservative member for Central Hull.[15] While in the Commons, he kept a close watch on Turkish affairs, often speaking at length on the subject.

Two confirmed beliefs stand out in those speeches. In Sykes view, Asiatic Turkey had defensible borders as it stood before the war. He feared that collapse of Turkey would result in a European war, for it was "impossible to divide the Ottoman Empire on any sound geographical basis."[16] He also had great sympathy for the Armenians, Kurds and Arabs in the Ottoman Empire, but he regarded the lack of progress and the corruption in the provinces as being as endemic as it was in Constantinople. He laid a large share of the blame at the feet of European financiers and concessionaires, among whom, especially in Syria, the French predominated,

and whose activity, he believed, was a threat to the Entente.[17] Hence, though sympathetic to French claims, he endorsed the prejudice against French commerce in the de Bunsen Committee's report.

Sykes was often given over to large enthusiasms, a characteristic which led to his being the object of suspicion by more sober heads, such as Hardinge. When, in August 1915, Sykes was given the task of filling in Hardinge and Middle Eastern officials on the fruits of the de Bunsen Committee's report, there began a long tour that was to take him to Cairo and Mesopotamia as well as India before his return to London at the beginning of December. Sykes and Hardinge were poles apart in their viewpoint. Hardinge thought Sykes overimpressed with Syrian Arabs; Sykes thought Hardinge completely bound by the Indian point of view. In Mesopotamia Sykes also left a poor impression. In Cairo, which he visited at the beginning and the end of his journey, he gained first hand knowledge of the dealings with Husayn, and took part in the negotiations with Faruqui, which led him to believe the Arabs would accept French adivsors and give France concessions in Syria.[18]

Before he began with Picot, Sykes was questioned at length before the War Committee. Though he said that he did not place much faith in the Arabs as a fighting force, he felt the matter was nevertheless urgent. When Bonar Law suggested putting the French off until the end of the war, Sykes objected that that was just what the French feared. He recommended settling with the French, organizing an army in Egypt, and then coordinating operations for Arabia. When Asquith offered the opinion that a "political deal" with France was necessary, Sykes replied, "Quite so." He argued that in the future Britain would have to eschew the passive defence of Egypt, and build up a force there "capable of offensive action." For the moment,

the large problem was to overcome Arab prejudice against the French. The root of the problem, Sykes offered, "lies in Franco-Levantine finance."[19] The War Committee, not yet convinced by Robertson that Middle Eastern adventures were unwise, concluded that some offensive action from Egypt was desirable, but that an understanding with France must come first. In any event, as Crew wrote Bertie, though continued Turkish control of Arabia always posed the threat of "a regular Jihad," immediate offensive action was out of the question. Bertie reported that the French regarded action at Salonica and "the possibility of an expedition somewhere not defined" as sufficient to prevent a Turco-German advance on Egypt. He ascribed all the trouble to the fact that Britain had not immediately objected to the "absurd claims" of France.[20]

There was no use ranting about French claims. Given the task of making headway, Sykes was asked by Nicolson to meet Picot and "examine the whole question so as to clear the ground of details" and isolate "the factors of the general problem." Before meeting Picot, Sykes then outlined the problem as he saw it and proposed a general solution.[21] The main problem was to discover a middle ground and to harmonize the requirements of France, Britain and the Arabs. To compensate for "the inconvenience and loss attendant upon the disruption of the Ottoman Empire," France needed a guarantee of her position in Syria and assurance of a field for her economic aspirations in the Middle East. The Arabs required recognition of their nationality, protection from foreign aggression and "reestablishment of their position as a continuing factor in the world's progress." Great Britain required assurance of her position in the Persian Gulf, opportunity to develop lower Mesopotamia, a commercial and military communication between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, guarantees for her trade and commerce, and a solution to the problem of Jerusalem

satisfactory to Christians, Muslims and Jews.

To solve the conflicting territorial claims, especially over the inland towns of Syria, Sykes proposed creation of a confederation of Arab states in the Arabian peninsula and the hinterland of Syria under the suzerainty of an Arab chief but under the protection of Britain and France, and in which the two European nations would divide the area under Arab sovereignty into zones of commercial and administrative interest. On the Syrian littoral France, and in Baghdad and Basra Britain, would "be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire." The concept of zones of interest, on the one hand, and zones of direct control, on the other hand, remained a prominent feature of the final settlement, and is perhaps the major contribution of Sykes, though it is clear he was in close contact with Kitchener through Colonel Oswald Fitzgerald, aide-de-camp to the war minister.[22] In addition, an international administration would be set up in Palestine after consultation with France and subsequently with Russia, Italy and representatives of Islam. Britain would, however, occupy the Mediterranean ports of Haifa and Acre, and be allowed to transport water for irrigation purposes to her sphere from the French sphere. France and Britain would reach an agreement as to the connection of Alexandretta with Baghdad by rail.

Sykes' proposals became the basis of discussion when he met Picot on 21 December. After some discussion, in which Sykes was persuaded to revise the details of his proposal with regard to Beirut, Picot returned to Paris for consultation.[23] A rough outline of agreement had been obtained. Britain would have direct control in Mesopotamia from Baghdad to Basra. France would have an area of direct control whose southern limit would be bounded by a line drawn approximately from Tartus to Kilis to Birecik to Cizre (Jezireh.)

The eastward and northward extent of the French zone would be arranged with Russia. The Arab state would include all the lands south of the proposed southern limit of the French sphere, but it would be divided into spheres of commercial and administrative interest, the boundaries of which were reserved for later settlement, though it was proposed to pivot on Dayr-az-Zawr. France would nominate the governor and police the coast of Beirut, which would be within the Arab state. Jerusalem would form a separate international enclave. The allocation of Mosul and the disposition of Haifa and Acre were also reserved for later settlement.[24] Sykes' proposals amounted to a strong challenge to the French claim for all of Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine. He would not give up the British claim to Haifa or the plan for internationalization of Jerusalem. The concept of two types of zones, one featuring annexation and the other protectorate, was established. In effect, Sykes and Picot were proposing a full partiton of Asiatic Turkey outside Asia Minor. British territory in the south buffered the Arabs from the French, as Sykes had suggested it should do when he appeared before the War Committee.[25] The French to the north acted as a buffer against Russia, because France was later assigned Mosul and territory around Ruwandiz on the Persian border.

For his part, Picot obtained agreement from Paris that Damascus, Hama, Homs, and Aleppo would be within the boundaries of the Arab state but in the French sphere of influence. Apparently, the French government were impressed with arguments that without an agreement to which the Arabs could become a party, France's position in Syria was jeopardized. Sykes had told the War Committee that British diplomacy must concentrate on impressing upon the French that "if matters are allowed to drift they [the French] will lose their real anchorage in Syria, owing to the

anticipated massacre of Syrian Christians in the same way that Armenians were massacred."[26] The recognition by France of the importance of Arab cooperation was a vital step towards a resolution of the deadlock of a month before. By 3 January 1916, a draft agreement had been signed by Sykes and Picot, though not until 4 February and 8 February respectively did the British and French governments formally endorse the agreement.[27]

Meanwhile, Nicolson had invited departmental comment on the agreement proposed by Sykes and Picot. In common with spokesmen for the Director of Imperial Defence and the Admiralty, Brigadier General G.M.W. Macdonogh of the War Office argued that Britain was "rather in the position of the hunters who divided up the skin of the bear before they killed it."[28] The D.I.D. questioned whether France really quarrelled with Britain's position in Egypt, a reason which had been raised for the agreement by Sykes. Moreover, it doubted that France would split the Entente over a Middle Eastern issue. And, if the main object was to prevent the Arabs from joining Turkey, it was not a diplomatic agreement but rather a show of force which was necessary.[29] As Captain Hall, who drafted the Admiralty appreciation, put it, the most desirable action was an occupying force cutting off the Arabs and screening them from the Turks.[30]

Macdonogh also raised the issue of Britain's long term commitments in the Middle East.

> From a military point of view the principle of inserting a wedge of French territory between any British zone and the Russian Caucasus would seem in every way desirable, but I would point out that the scheme, both of a railway from Haifa to Baghdad and of occupying the Lower Tigris Valley, involves very considerable military obligations, which might present a very different aspect at the end of the war from which they do now.

It was fine to envision, as Hall did, a band of British territory "from Egypt through Mesopotamia and Southern Persia to Baluchistan and India,"

but how far could one stretch the frontier of India? The protection of the land and sea routes through the Middle East to India had always been a vital object of British policy, and the method of obtaining that object had been to support the Ottoman Empire in Asia. Despite the problems associated with the old policy, it was, in contrast to the grand schemes being put forward, a bargain in imperial outlay.

In response to criticisms of the untimeliness of the negotiations, Sykes defended an early settlement in order to allay French suspicions of Britain's motives in her dealings with the Arabs.

> ... until the Arabs know where they stand as regards the French, they will continue to set us by the ear whenever they can. This is natural to them and they endeavour to flatter the English by constantly harping on their dislike of the French and French methods - as a matter of fact I do not believe their dislike of the French is as great as they pretend even among Moslems. Once the situation is clear, we can go forward with a real Arab policy and without fear of getting into trouble.[31]

Hence, while Sykes proceeded with Picot, McMahon carried on his exchange with Husayn. But the High Commissioner chose not to be specific on the demands of France, let alone on the nature of British pledges not yet finalized. Husayn renounced the Arab claim to the vilayets of Mersina and Adana, but stood firm on the inclusion of the inland towns and Beirut in the Arab state.[32] After McMahon reiterated that French interest came to play in both Aleppo and Beirut vilayets,[33] Husayn made a final, guarded concession. He said that he desired to avoid causing trouble for France and Britain, but remarked that after the war the Arabs would ask the two European nations "for what we now leave to France in Beirut and its coasts."[34] When later, in early March, Nicolson informed Cambon of Arab reservations concerning Beirut, the French ambassador dismissed the

Sharif's statements as being the sort of obligatory bluster to be expected of an Arab.[35] In Nicolson's own opinion, the Sharif's words little disturbed the French, "who have always maintained that the Syrian Arabs do not care a snap for the Grand Sherif."[36] Behind the ready conversion of the French to the need for an Arab settlement was the realization that the Sharif lacked substance and would find widespread support difficult to acquire in the Arab world. If anything, some British officials tended to exaggerate the immediate value of Arab allies, whereas the French tended to underestimate the changes being wrought in the Middle East by the war. Husayn's negligibility before the war need not necessarily continue after the war. For his part, the Sharif was content to reserve his claim. The French did not expect him ever to make good on his reservations regarding Syria.

For her part, Britain determined to make it a condition of any Middle Eastern settlement that the Arabs fulfill their pledge to revolt. If the Sharif did not act, Britain would feel free to recast the settlement with France. This was made clear to Husayn, yet nothing happened. By mid-April 1916, Grey had completely tired of negotiating. "We have gone far enough," he said, "in promises to the Sharif and he has done nothing – we may give him arms and money but no more negotiations until he has done something."[37] Having gone as far as he had, which was as far as he was prepared to go, Grey could do little but express his exasperation. The momentum of the French and Arab negotiations virtually ruled out any sudden changes in direction, as had been illustrated by an episode at the end of 1915.

In December, the Turkish Minister of Marine, Djemal Pasha, had secretly communicated to the Russians terms by which Turkey might settle

for peace.[38] Sazonov believed that any internal disturbances in Turkey should be encouraged, but the French immediately announced that whatever happened, they were unwilling to set aside their claim in Syria and Cilicia. Grey merely mentioned Britain's position in Basra, which she had already proclaimed would never fall into Turkish hands, but he also had severe doubts about the possibilities of success arising from Djemal's proposals.[39] Nicolson, who also had serious misgivings about Djemal's sudden proposals, pointed out that the minister's scheme for peace would conflict with Britain's Arab dealings.[40] Though Djemal's scheme came to nothing, it appears that Britain no more than France would have entertained peace on the basis of a return to the status quo ante bellum.

Whatever the holdup with Husayn, Allied diplomacy moved on. The outlines of the Franco-British agreement having been endorsed in Paris and London,[41] Sykes and Picot travelled to Petrograd to obtain Russian participation. At first, it appeared that Sazonov would agree to the Franco-British understanding without seeing it.[42] But the Russian victory in February at Erzerum, British concern that Russia be fully consulted, and the French desire to settle outstanding issues resulted in the second joint Sykes-Picot venture in diplomacy.[43]

Before Sykes left London, Grey informed him that Britain had no intention of forcing Russia to accede to French desiderata, and Kitchener told him to impress upon the Russians that Britain merely desired to settle contentious issues among the members of Entente, and had no wish to aggrandize herself. The Foreign Office expected trouble once Sazonov discovered the extent of the French claim. The French evidently also expected trouble. Cambon had told Nicolson that the French hoped to keep the internationalization of Palestine "up their sleeve so as to bring it forward as a concession, when discussing other matters with

Russia."[44] As was expected in London, Sazonov reacted unfavourably to the extent of the French sphere, particularly in the region of Kurdistan north of Ruwandiz. In defending the eastward extension of the French zone, Paléologue argued that Britain desired a buffer between her territory and the Russian, and, if France were to give up territory on the Persian border, Britain would insist on having it.[45] In London, Crewe sputtered that the French ambassador's outburst was "an intolérable impertinence. I consider the Russians preferable neighbors to the French anywhere in the East."[46] The next day, 11 March, Buchanan and Sykes met with Sazonov to assure him that Britain had no design for a French buffer, a denial not strictly false but not quite true either. The convenience of a French buffer was recognized and even encouraged by old India hands used to assuming Russia the enemy in Asia, and was in a sense drawn into the Franco-British agreement, probably at the urging of Kitchener, but it is clear that Britain expected Russian objections would have to be satisfied. As it was, Sykes proposed the compromise which composed Russian and French differences by an exchange of territories, the French relinquishing territory around Bitlis and Van for territory north of Maras. The buffer remained.

As to Palestine, Russia was only interested in internationalization of the Holy places, while in Armenia she preferred to maintain Turkish suzerainty. Russia had no wish to annex Armenia.[47] As Sykes later explained, the Russians wanted as few Armenians as possible in Russian territory. An Armenian state under French rule would also be acceptable, "as Russians can say to Armenians if you wish to be independent migrate to Armenian state where there is ample room." Sazonov only specified that Erzerum could not be returned to Turkey. West of that point Russia

had no interest.[48]

As regards Palestine, there was some worry in London that the Russians would be too soft with the French, but Sazonov's view was that except for the Holy Places, the matter was between France and Britain. Then, in the midst of the negotiations in Petrograd, Sykes and Picot devised an elaborate scheme whereby an Arab chief would rule, a British land company would be set up and France would be guaranteed a liason with the Palestine government to protect her religious interests. Grey replied promptly that Sykes ought not speak of Palestine in any way without first making it clear that Britain had no designs for a protectorate there. Sykes' initiative seems to have been prompted by his growing concern to do something dramatic to swing Zionists to the Allied cause.[49] The Sykes-Picot scheme for Palestine never got off the ground, and, in view of Russian lethargy about the whole issue, France was left to accept the exchange of territories in the North proposed by Sykes. The ploy to use Palestine flopped.

After the Petrograd talks, resentment lingered on both sides. Paléologue complained of Sykes' professing Anglo-French solidarity while he drew maps that Sazonov then used in negotiation with France. There is some truth to Paléologue's suspicion that Britain only half-heartedly supported France. With regard to Russian claims around Bitlis and Van, Nicolson remarked that the more territory Russia acquired, "the better it will be and I hope we shall raise no objection."[50]

The exchange of a series of notes sealed the arrangements arrived at in London and Petrograd. France and Russia realized a settlement of the boundaries of their spheres, Britain adding her assent later.[51] Russia recognized the Anglo-French agreement as to the constitution of

the boundaries of an Arab state and the partition of Syria, Cilicia and Mesopotamia. The extent of Russian annexation was defined as "the regions of Erzerum, Treibizond, Van and Bitlis."[52] The French sphere of influence was extended south of Maras to include the territory bounded by a line running from "l'Ala Dagh" to "Kharput."[53] All boundaries were subject to modification by a future delimitation committee. All three governments received guarantees of existing commercial, religious and educational rights and privileges in the others' spheres, which is to say the rights obtaining in Turkish territory before the war.

The Franco-British agreement was formalized in an exchange of notes between Grey and Cambon on 9 and 16 May 1916.[54] The territorial limits of the respective spheres and areas of direct administration (annexation) were set out on a map accompanying the notes.[55] The agreement consisted of twelve clauses. The first two clauses set out the boundaries as negotiated by Sykes and Picot. By other clauses, Britain was accorded Haifa and Acre, for which she agreed not to cede Cyprus without French consent. Haifa and Alexandretta would be free ports. The future progress of the Baghdad railway would be regulated by mutual agreement. Turkish customs and tariffs were to be maintained for twenty-five years. Each party agreed not to cede rights given in the agreement to a third party, except the Arab state, without the agreement of the other, and agreed not to acquire territory in the Arabian peninsula or a naval base on the Red Sea. Negotiations with the Arabs would continue through Cairo, and it was agreed to consider measures to control the importation of arms into Arab regions.

In a letter to Cambon, Grey stipulated that British acceptance was subject to the provision that "the cooperation of the Arabs is secured, and that the Arabs fulfill the conditions and obtain the towns of Homs,

Hama, Damascus and Aleppo."[56] Hence, not only had Husayn to make good the Arab revolt, but the Arabs had to abide by the promise to allow French advisors in Syria and British advisors in Mesopotamia. France, of course, agreed to include the four towns and environs in the Arab state. Even though the Arabs were not a party to the agreement, it was a constant condition of British acceptance, even in spite of Husayn's dilatoriness in intervening against the Turks, that the agreement with France not compromise the creation of an Arab state or confederation of Arab states.

Three months after the agreement was signed, an exchange of notes clarified the attitude to be taken in the spheres of influence. It was agreed to change the words "protect" and "proteger" to "uphold" and "soutenir", because neither Grey nor Cambon wanted there to be any hint of protectorates.[57] Each nation was content with a virtual economic and advisory monopoly in its sphere of influence within the Arab state. In the meantime, it was enough to have settled the broad outlines of an agreement that promised to let all sides get on with the war, or so it must have seemed in the summer of 1916.

CONCLUSION

Turkey's entry into the war in 1914 posed serious questions for British officials in charge of Middle Eastern policy. For years the problem of what would become of Asiatic Turkey in the event of Ottoman collapse had been kept on ice. Time and again, European rivals for influence in the region had applied the cooling power of the doctrine of Ottoman "integrity and independence" to Middle Eastern hot spots. Turkish intervention constituted a shortcircuit of old refrigeration techniques. For a time, even after Turkish intervention, Grey hoped he could keep the Middle East cool by postponing detailed discussion of the succession until the successful conclusion of the war, though then even he expected Turkey to pay for her belligerency. But a series of British initiatives, which compounded one another when placed in the context of fighting a war with Allies, doomed that comfortable notion. The long feared scramble for spoils led not to, but grew out of, a war. And, however unseemly it was to be involved, Britain could hardly help herself.

Once the question was opened, expansionist thinking soon came to thrive in certain imperial outposts. Even those accustomed to caution and familiar with Britain's past policy, such as Hardinge, were lured by reveries of a future British imperial stronghold in the Middle East. Long conditioned to regard the region as the crossroads to India, officials all over the Empire, not excluding London, rose to assert this or that reputedly vital British interest. In the welter of conflicting opinion and advice, it is naturally difficult to perceive any consistent

line of policy. In fact, by early 1916 when the Sykes-Picot agreement was being fashioned, Britain had no coherent Middle Eastern policy. She had merely reacted to a series of events.

The first important reaction was Grey's, when he took the initiative in promising the Straits to Russia in November 1914. Though his complete thinking is obscure and open to conjecture, he seems to have intended nothing more than is obvious, that is, to reassure Russia that Britain would not stand in the way of Russian acquisition of Constantinople and the Straits, provided the war against Germany reached a successful conclusion. Russia's staying power was in doubt, and her continuation in the war deemed vital.

The next initiative in the chain of events was also British. It was momentous. The political effects of the Dardanelles campaign, itself politically motivated, put Britain directly on the road towards partition of Asiatic Turkey. Originally justified because it would help defeat Germany and save British soldiers from having to "chew barbed wire" in France, the proposed operation became a reality only when further justified as a rescue mission of hard-pressed Russia and as a masterstroke in Balkan diplomacy. No one listened when Field Marshall French objected that the proposed naval operation could hardly relieve Russia, and that it played the "German game" by diverting British forces from the "decisive spot, which is Germany herself."[1] The decision to go ahead with the Dardanelles operation marked the eclipse of the military experts until Robertson reasserted their position in late 1915. If British soldiers were chewed up by barbed wire in 1914, because of it British generals were chewed up by the politicians in 1915. Grey was right; one could not make a victory out of political and diplomatic calculation and

intrigue.

One obvious result of the Dardanelles campaign seems to have escaped the political calculators who approved it. When, in March 1915, before Britain mounted her full scale amphibious assault on Gallipoli, the Russians requested a more formal agreement than Grey's promise regarding Constantinople and the Straits, most members of the War Council objected to the untimeliness of the request. Grey at least saw the need to allay Russian fears that Britain might be stealing a march on her allies, which in fact she was decidedly not doing. The Russians, no longer so confident that they could pocket Grey's promise, saw the edge the Dardanelles campaign gave them. Of course, one could always make a virtue out of the Russian request, as Lloyd George did. Dividing the spoils would avoid post-war friction. Lloyd George at least had faith in Britain's power to control events.

It was then the French turn to lay a claim, which, given the magnitude of the Russian prize, was large. But it was not the size of the French claim that mattered, as Bertie believed it was. It was doubly difficult to avoid treating a French claim. On the one hand, Britain had granted the Russian request, which threatened no vital British interest. On the other, Britain stood preeminent in the Middle East, and was currently besieging the Dardanelles, advancing on Baghdad, and intriguing in Arabia. It is no wonder that Grey and Kitchener kept saying that Britain was not attempting to steal a march on her allies. It was an awkward position. One could well become a little uneasy at having to mollify allies whose actions one's own actions had encouraged. It is a little too easy to say Britain merely reacted to her Allies'

wishes.

The advance in Mesopotamia and the intrigue in Arabia were never justified, except remotely, as blows against the prime foe. Neither measure threatened even to defeat Turkey. In both cases, the concerns motivating British actions were at bottom imperial, whether they are seen as a desire to counteract Turkish pan-Islamism or as a need to assert British interests in the vital Persian Gulf and approaches to the Suez-Red Sea route to India.

Britain's dealings with the Arabs in 1915-1916 have since been blown out of all proportion to that attached to them by anyone then, except perhaps by a few Arabophiles in Cairo. Few British officials at the time could foretell any great difficulty would arise even from McMahon's maladroit and much criticized exchange with Husayn. The outcry from Mesopotamia and India was on account of McMahon's apparent sacrifice of British interests, not on account of anticipated trouble from the Arabs, though, it is true, expressions to that effect were not unknown. Hirtzel and Clerk both feared that Britain might one day pay dearly for her courting of Husayn. For the most part, British officials were boggled at the circumstance of Husayn's inaction. As late as September 1916, even after the Sharifan revolt got off the ground, Grey maintained a glacial view of Arabian commitments. As he explained it to Sir Ronald Rodd, British ambassador to Italy:

> The Shereef of Mecca had communicated to the Egyptian authorities his desire to make himself independent but had insisted upon knowing whether we were prepared to recognise an independent Arab state. We were, of course, prepared to do that if he succeeded in establishing his independence; for all we were pledged to was that the Moslem holy places should remain in independent Moslem hands.[2]

Here Grey seems to be glossing over the fact that Kitchener and the officials in Cairo had not been backward in forging initiatives with Husayn. The notion that it was all "a castle in the air" seems to have blinded Grey and many others to the effects of British encouragement of Arab independence, however remote that independence was.

At the time the Sykes-Picot agreement was made, the precise boundaries of the still to be forged Arab state had not been defined, and Husayn had dropped all his attempts to prod Britain to a more precise commitment. Both sides seemed content for the moment. In Cairo, Clayton and the new head of the Arab Bureau, D.G. Hogarth, wanted to keep the Sykes-Picot treaty secret from Husayn, probably because it had more precision to it, and even went futher to suggest that nothing should be done in future to define boundaries of the Arab state, but that was not London's position.[3] The Arabs had merely to do their part before there would be more negotiations. The Sykes-Picot agreement made provision for an independent Arab state, whether of a wider sort or just restricted to the region of the Holy Places. Husayn himself seems to have been content with the assurances he received from McMahon. After all, he had the prospect before him of heading an independent Arab state under the aegis of Britain. But, as Grey told Rodd, he had first to establish his independence. As time went on, Husayn even began to think Britain should do that for him, a notion in which he was encouraged by Cairo.[4]

Britain hardly acted in bad faith. The bargain was clear enough even through McMahon's tortured prose and Husayn's equivocation. And it is also clear that the Sykes-Picot agreement did not conflict with Britain's assurances to Husayn. Though Husayn did not know it, the agreement actually reaffirmed the British pledge to him. The Arabian

peninsula was left to the Arabs, among whom Husayn was not the only prospective head of an Arab state. In their respective spheres of influence (areas A and B on the map attached to the agreement), France and Britain had agreed to "uphold" Arab sovereignty if such arose. In coastal Syria, where direct French administration applied, and in Basra and Baghdad vilayets, where Britain reserved the right to make "special arrangements", the two European nations were unprepared to gamble away their interests on the basis of no guarantee of future stability. To be sure, they behaved like imperial powers in an undeveloped region. The wonder is not that they made the Sykes-Picot agreement, but rather that they paid such attention to the provision of soil on which a local political entity could grow. Having got to the point of providing for the considerable vacuum that would apply once Turkey was defeated, they hardly ignored realities as they appeared in 1916. The trouble was that those realities were undergoing rapid change, not that the agreement was particularly ill-conceived.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I

[1]The Anglo-French agreement was embodied in an exchange of notes of 15 May 1916; the Franco-Russian in an exchange of 26 April 1916; and the Anglo-Russian in a British note of 23 May 1916, to which Russia finally acceded officially, with one minor reservation, on 16 September 1916.

[2]The term "Middle East" is difficult to define. As between the choices "Near East" and "Middle East", the latter would seem most suitable to indicate the general area under Ottoman suzerainty in 1914, except when exactitude is required, in which case "Asiatic Turkey" or the "Ottoman Empire" are the better terms. As M.S. Anderson has noted, before the war "the term 'Near East' was usually taken to include the Balkans, the Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire and even the Caucasus." The Eastern Question, 1774-1923 (London, 1966), p. ix. The "Near East", which will be used here in the sense Anderson applies to it, is not now a common term, whereas the "Middle East" is. As Roderic H. Davison remarks, "well before 1914, a terminological equilibrium had developed. The Near East centered on Turkey, the Middle East on India, the Far East on China." He adds that after the war Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq became incorporated in the term "Middle East" as being part of the approach to India. "Where is the Middle East," in Richard H. Nolte, ed., The Modern Middle East (New York, 1963), p. 18. Today the general area understood to be encompassed by the term "Middle East" would seem to include Turkey, Iran, Israel, Egypt and the Arab states of Asia, and will be so used here.

[3]Albert Pingaud, Histoire diplomatique de la France pendant la grande guerre, III (Paris, 1938); Pierre Renouvin, "Les buts de guerre du gouvernement français, 1914-1918," Revue Historique, CCXXV (1960), pp. 1-38; George H. Cassar, The French and the Dardanelles: A Study of Failure in the Conduct of War (London, 1971); Clarence Jay Smith, Jr., The Russian Struggle for Power, 1914-1917 (New York, 1956).

[4]Halford L. Hoskins, British Routes to India (New York, 1966), pp. 37-40, 286 n. 8, 478-80; Gerald S. Graham, The Politics of Naval Supremacy (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 65-66; R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians (London, 1965), p. 13.

[5]Grey to Sir George Buchanan (British ambassador to Russia), 4 July 1913, no. 498, reprinted in G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., British Documents on the Origins of the War, X, Part I (London, 1938), p. 481. Hereafter cited as B.D.

[6]Quoted in W.N. Medlicott, The Congress of Berlin and After (London, 1963), pp. 54 and 71.

[7]Elie Kedourie, England and the Middle East, 1914-1921 (London, 1956), pp. 20-21.

[8]Statements to this effect are numerous. See, for example, Grey's reflection in Viscount Grey of Fallodan, Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916, I (London, 1925), p. 249.

[9]The course of naval opinion may be followed in Arthur J. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power (New York, 1940), pp. 219-247. See also L.M. Penson, "The New Course in British Foreign Policy, 1892-1902," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Series 4, XXV (1943), pp. 130ff.; G. Monger, The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy, 1900-1907 (London, 1963), p. 295.

[10]Kedourie, ch. i, passim; Cedric J. Lowe, The Reluctant Imperialists (London, 1967), pp. 31-38, 99, 196-203. Medlicott, Congress, p. 17, remarks on the Ottoman "capacity for existing indefinitely in conditions which would certainly have produced collapse in Western countries," a circumstance which, because collapse was apparently imminent and yet unforthcoming, greatly encouraged British statesmen to go again and again to the well of reform, only to find its water made bitter drinking. It should be noted that real British zeal for reform began in the period after the Congress of Berlin, and recurred periodically, especially when word of atrocities in the Ottoman Empire reached the British public.

[11]Charles Webster remarks that "measures necessary to modernise Turkey and make her more capable of fulfilling her role as the barrier against Russia, were bound to undermine the faith that kept her together." The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, I (New York, 1969), p. 86.

[12]For British response to Tewfik's demarche see B.D., X, Part II, pp. 901-902, especially the memorandum by Sir Louis Mallet, who advised Grey that rather than seeking a Turkish alliance Britain would do better by securing renewed international commitment "to respect the independence and integrity of the present Turkish dominion, which might go so far as neutralisation, and by participation by all the Great Powers in financial control and the application of reforms."

[13]This episode may be followed in B.D., X, Part II, pp. 826-33. In his opinion to Grey on the matter, Mallet speculated that an Arab uprising and victory against the Turks might leave Europe "faced with the question of partition of the Turkish Empire which might easily produce complications of a serious nature, whilst it is difficult to estimate what might be the effects on India of a prolonged struggle for possession of the Caliphate." No. 193, 18 March 1914, p. 828.

[14]Mesopotamia will be used here to indicate the territory of the present state of Iraq. In 1914, Iraq was the Arab name for the region and was used infrequently by the British except by local administrators. See V.H. Rothwell, "Mesopotamia in British War Aims, 1914-1918," The Historical Journal, XIII, 2(1970), p. 273 n.1.

[15]The flavour of Mesopotamian reaction may be seen in Sir Arnold Wilson's remark in his memoirs, first published in 1930, that the agreement "ran counter to every sound principle, and would have proved unworkable." Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1914-1917 (New York, 1969), p. 153.

[16]Grey, pp. 160-61.

[17]Quoted in Aaron Klieman, Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World (Baltimore, 1970), p. 15 n. 31.

[18]Shane Leslie, Mark Sykes: His Life and Letters (London, 1923), pp. 250-51.

[19]Edward Meade Earle, Turkey, the Great Powers, and the Bagdad Railway: A Study in Imperialism (New York, 1966), p. 295. Earle's book was first published in 1923.

[20]W.W. Gottlieb, Studies in Secret Diplomacy During the First World War (London, 1957), pp. 52-53 and 61. For a view generally sympathetic to Turkey, see Harry N. Howard, The Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History (New York, 1966), passim.

[21]Trumbull Higgins, Winston Churchill and the Dardanelles: A Dialogue in Ends and Means (New York, 1963), pp. 246-50.

[22]Klieman, p. 6.

[23]Max Beloff, Imperial Sunset: Britain's Liberal Empire, 1897-1921 (London, 1969), p. 182.

[24]C.J. Lowe and M.L. Dockrill, The Mirage of Power, British Foreign Policy, 1914-1921 (London, 1972), p. 208; Briton Cooper Busch, Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914-1921 (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 87-88; Jukka Nevakivi, Britain, France and the Arab Middle East, 1914-1920 (London, 1969), pp. 36-44; V.H. Rothwell, British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy, 1914-1918 (Oxford, 1971), pp. 28-30. For similar viewpoints see Howard M. Sachar, The Emergence of the Middle East (New York, 1969), p. 158; Halford L. Hoskins, The Middle East: Problem Area in World Politics (New York, 1954, p. 4. Zeine N. Zeine gives an account that ascribes initiative for the agreement to the French and stresses that it was an outcome of other wartime commitments. The Struggle for Arab Independence (Beirut, 1960), pp. 4-14.

[25]Kedourie, p. 165.

[26]Elizabeth Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956 (London, 1963), p. 24; Hoskins, Problem Area, p. 149.

[27]Monroe, pp. 35-36; Sir Ronald Wingate, Wingate of the Sudan (London, 1955), p. 196.

[28]For instance, in his memoirs David Lloyd George has described the agreement as "a fatuous arrangement from every point of view," a judgement he was never heard to express at the time the agreement was in the making, for he rather encouraged a partition and then took no interest in its course. He seems rather to have taken his view of the agreement from a post-war stance. Though many authors have compared the agreement and the pledges to Husayn, the most comprehensive examination, at least of the latter, is by Elie Kedourie, In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretations, 1914-1939 (London, 1976), chs. i-iii, passim.

[29]Ibid., pp. 272-280, 282.

[30]George Antonius, The Arab Awakening (Beirut, n.d.), pp. 248-254.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER II

[1]For the development of the Turco-German relationship from alliance to intervention see Ulrich Trumpener, Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918 (Princeton, 1968), ch. ii, passim; ——, "Turkey's Entry into World War I: An Assesment of Responsibilities," The Journal of Modern History, XXXIV (December, 1962), pp. 369-380. ——, "German Military Aid to Turkey in 1914: An Historical Re-evaluation," Ibid., XXXII (June, 1960), pp. 145-149. Smith, pp. 67-68, believes Turkey made a "terrific miscalculation" in July 1914 in believing Britain would remain neutral in any European war.

[2]Grey to Bertie, No. 533, 15 Aug 1914, Public Record Office, F[oreign] O[ffice] 371/2138/38623; also reproduced in Grey, p. 167.

[3]Ulrich Trumpener, "The Escape of the Goeben and Breslau: A Reassessment," Canadian Journal of History, VI, 2 (September, 1971), pp. 171-187. Trumpener emphasizes the role played by neglect on the part of the Admiralty and the Foreign Office in not informing the admirals in the Mediterranean of the likelihood that the Goeben and Breslau would make for Constantinople. He does not believe that London wanted to let the ships escape to Turkey, as Gottlieb suggests in Studies, p. 47ff.

[4]Mallet to Grey, No. 572, 20 Aug 1914, FO 371/2138/38623. In his study of the Young Turks, Ahmad Feroz reveals that Enver and his associates did not really gain ascendancy until 1913-14, and so might be expected to have still felt unsure of their position in August 1914. Ahmad Feroz, The Young Turks: the Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908-1914 (Oxford, 1969), ch. v, passim.

[5]Minutes by Nicolson on [Henry D.] Beaumont [who was on the staff of the embassy at Constantinople] to Grey, No. 493, 11 Aug 1914, FO 371/2137/35602 and by Eyre Crowe dated 23 Aug 1914 attached to V.N. Giers [Russian ambassador at Constantinople] to Grey, 19 Aug 1914, Fo 371/2138/38623. Giers had recommended outbidding the Germans.

[6]Minute by Churchill on Beaumont to Grey, No. 493.

[7]Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, III (London, 1971), pp.194-200; Winston Churchill, World Crisis, I (London, 1923), pp. 482-83. For Grey's view of the crucial role of the sailors, see Grey to Mallet, No. 615, 30 Sep 1914, FO 371/2142/50851, and Trumpener, "The Escape," p. 185.

[8]Mallet to Grey, No. 572. See also Clarence Jay Smith, Jr., "Great Britain and the 1914-1915 Straits Agreement with Russia: the British Promise of November 1914," American Historical Review, LXX (July, 1965), p. 1017.

[9]Grey to Mallet, 22 Aug 1914, in Grey, pp. 167-68.

[10]Grey to Mallet, No. 461, 29 Aug 1914, FO 371/2138/38623.

[11]Quoted in Gilbert, p. 208.

[12]Churchill, p. 491.

[13]Grey, p. 68.

[14]For a report of Sazonov's views see Buchanan to Grey, No. 309, 20 Aug 1914, FO 371/2138/38623. As early as 6 August, Grey had cabled Mallet: "You should make it quite clear that if Turkey sides against us there are no limits to the losses she may incur." Quoted in Gilbert, p. 209.

[15]Gottlieb, pp. 52-53.

[16]Grey, p. 165.

[17]Smith, pp. 30-41; C.J. Lowe, "The Failure of British Diplomacy in the Balkans, 1914-1916," Canadian Journal of History, 4, 1 (March, 1969), pp. 76-77.

[18]Grey, p. 174; Churchill, p. 486-87.

[19]Ibid.; Grey, p. 173: Gilbert, p. 201.

[20]Quoted in Smith, "Straits Agreement," p. 1018.

[21]Grey to Mallet, No. 660, 11 Oct 1914, FO 371/2138/38623; Smith, Russian Struggle, pp. 20-30, 36-39, 74-76.

[22]Grey to Mallet, No. 462, 29 Aug 1914, and Mallet to Grey, No. 658, 31 Aug 1914, FO 371/2138/38623.

[23]Mallet to Grey, No. 957, 11 Oct 1914, ibid.

[24]FO to I[ndia] O[ffice], No. 1, Secret, 1 Sep 1914, FO 371/2139/44923.

[25]Phillip Magnus, Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 333, 346-55, 362.

[26]The text of Kitchener's letter was communicated to Cairo in FO to Cheetham, No. 219, 24 Sep 1914, and Abdullah's reply to London in Cheetham to FO, No. 233, 31 Oct 1914, FO 371/2139/44923. Cheetham was temporarily in charge of the High Commissioner's Office in Cairo. See also, Sir Ronald Storrs, Orientations (London, 1943), p. 152; Antonius, p. 127; Busch, Britain, India, p. 58; and Kedourie, Labyrinth, pp. 15-17.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., p. 18-20.

[29]Ibid., pp. 20-22; Storrs, p. 152; Antonius, p. 127; and Busch, p. 58.

[30]Grey to Cheetham, No. 347, 14 Nov 1914, FO 371/2140/46261; Busch, pp. 60-64; Kedourie, p. 26.

[31]Viceroy to IO, 20 Nov 1914, FO 371/2144/44923. For an assessment of Husayn's position see Mallet to Grey, No. 193, 18 Mar 1914, in B.D., X, Part II, pp. 828-29 and C. Ernest Dawn,"The Amir of Mecca Al Husayn Ibn-Ali and the Origin of the Arab Revolt," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 104, 1 (February, 1960), pp. 11-34.

[32]Quoted in Busch, p. 62.

[33]Kedourie, pp. 14-15, 28-30, 51.

[34]Ibid., p. 31.

[35]FO to IO, 16 Oct 1914, FO 371/2140/46261.

[36]Philip P. Graves, Briton and Turk (London, 1941), p. 81.

[37]"Memorandum by Mr. Fitzmaurice," enclosed in FO to IO, 16 Oct 1914.

[38] Quoted in Kedourie, p. 32.

[39] Magnus, pp. 373-74; Jukka Nevakivi, "Lord Kitchener and the Partition of the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916," in K. Bourne and D.C. Watt, eds., Studies in International History (London, 1967), p. 321.

[40]Quoted in Kedourie, p. 53.

[41]Ibid., p. 50

[42]Minutes by Clerk and Nicolson on McMahon to Grey, No. 251, 9 Nov 1914, FO 371/2141/46756. For a discussion of Britain's pre-war pledge of disinterestedness in Syria, see Nevakivi, Britain, France, pp. 8-10.

[43]Bertie to Grey, No. 540, 6 Dec 1914, FO 371/2144/61439; Maurice Paléologue, An Ambassador's Memoirs, I (New York, n.d.), p. 193.

[44]Barrow's memorandum, "The role of India in a Turkish war," is quoted at length in Brig. Gen. F.J. Moberly, The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918: the History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, I (London, 1923), pp. 86-88, and is found in full in Great Britain, Public Record Office, CAB 42/1/4.

[45]Moberly, pp. 91-92; Busch, p. 6; Philip p. Graves, The Life of Sir Percy Cox (London, n.d.), p. 178.

[46]Moberly, p. 95 and Marion Kent, Oil and Empire, British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil, 1900-1920 (London, 1976), p. 6. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company's installation at Abadan was 140 miles from the wells in Southern Persia. The pipeline carried 7000 tons of crude monthly.

[47]Moberly, pp. 92-95; Kent, p. 118.

[48]Moberly, p. 94; Nevakivi, Britain, France, pp. 83-84. For an examination of Britain's pre-war contact with Ibn Sa'ud, see Briton Cooper Busch, Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914 (Berkeley, 1967), pp. 318 and 340.

[49]Moberly, pp. 133-53.

[50]Minutes by Grey and Kitchener on Lord Inchcape to Grey, 3 Dec 1914, FO 371/2144/61439.

[51]Viceroy to IO, 7 Dec 1914, FO 371/2144/61439, and Inchcape to Grey, 3 Dec 1914. For Hardinge's views see also V.H. Rothwell, "Mesopotoamia and British War Aims," pp. 274-75 and Douglas Goold, "Lord Hardinge and the Mesopotamia Expedition and Inquiry, 1914-1917," The Historical Journal, 19, 4 (1976), pp. 927-931.

[52]Minutes by Crowe and Grey on IO to FO, 5 Dec 1914. On December 9, Crewe wrote Hardinge that "the war has not yet reached a stage which justifies annexation." FO 371/2144161439. Wilson, Loyalties, p. 16, argues that London's attitude hampered any chance of winning Arab cooperation in Mesopotamia.

[53]Quoted in Smith, "Straits Agreement," p. 1025.

[54]Smith, Russian Struggle, pp. 23-30.

[55]Ibid., pp. 43-50.

[56]Smith, "Straits Agreement," p. 1030; Trumpener, Germany, p. 58. In a move to conciliate some of his colleagues, Enver sent an excusatory note to Russia, but he, unlike Sazonov, does not seem to have been serious.

[57]Buchanan to Grey, No. 438, 24 Sep 1914, FO 371/2140/46261; Smith, Russian Struggle, pp. 77-78.

[58]Ibid., p. 81.

[59]Ibid., pp. 84-85, 87-96, 101-104; Smith, "Straits Agreement," p. 1031; Rothwell, British War Aims, p. 25.

[60]Sidney H. Zebel, Balfour: A Political Biography (Cambridge, 1973), p. 213.

[61]Lord Hankey, Government Control in War (Cambridge, 1945), pp. 32-36.

[62]Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Memories and Reflections, 1892-1927, II (Toronto, 1928), p. 104; Lord Hankey, The Supreme Command, 1914-1918, I (London, 1961), p. 239. All further references to works by Hankey are to this volume.

[63]Roy Jenkins, Asquith (London, 1964), pp. 332-33.

[64]Zebel, p. 216.

[65]Jenkins, p. 339.

[66]Grey, pp. 152-53, where he writes, "as if more copious use of words in the form of threats and promises could compensate for the effect of defeats on the battlefield." Grey took the outbreak of war to be a great personal defeat, and became, as Asquith recorded, "most dolorous and despondent." See Keith Robbins, Sir Edward Grey (London, 1971), pp. 300-333, passim.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER III

[1]Great Britain, Public Record Office, Cabinet Papers, 1815-1916, CAB 42/1/4. This series contains the records of the War Council and its successors. Hankey recorded the minutes in the third person. See also Churchill, II, p. 47. The idea of a feint in Palestine had been discussed before the war by the C.I.D. See Hankey, p. 242.

[2]Hankey, pp. 223-24; Churchill, I, pp. 487-88. In August 1914, Major-General C.E. Caldwell on the staff of the War Office advised Churchill that storming the Dardanelles would be "extremely difficult."

[3]Hankey, pp. 244-50 and David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, I (London, 1933), pp. 369-80 reproduce the two memoranda.

[4]Churchill, II, pp. 44-45.

[5]Ibid., p. 97.

[6]Memorandum by French, 3 Jan 1915, CAB 42/1/9.

[7]Churchill, II, p. 94; Magnus, pp. 369-72. Despite much vacillation, Kitchener did not release significant numbers of troops until late March 1915.

[8]CAB 42/1/11.

[9]CAB 42/1/12.

[10]Gilbert, II, pp. 249-50.

[11]Jenkins, p. 350; Gilbert, II, p. 253.

[12]CAB 42/1/16.

[13]Memorandum by Fisher, 25 Jan 1915, CAB 42/1/24.

[14]Quoted in Gilbert, II, p. 273.

[15]Churchill, II, pp. 172-73; Magnus, p. 272, claims that in January 1915 "the supreme war lord's views about strategy were never questioned." See also, Gilbert, pp. 270-274.

[16]CAB 42/1/26.

[17]Gilbert, II, p. 267; Lord Bertie, Diary of Lord Bertie of Thame, I (London, 1924), p. 172; Cassar, p. 50-59 and 251-54, where an exchange of letters between Churchill and the French Minister of Marine which settled cooperation at the Dardanelles is printed.

[18]Memorandum by Samuel, CAB 42/1/29.

[19]Grey to Buchanan, No. 206, 10 Feb 1915, FO 371/2481/4259.

[20]CAB 42/1/42.

[21]Basil Liddell Hart, A History of the World War, 1914-1918 (London, n.d), p. 218. The Russian military had no faith in Britain's ability to capture Constantinople, and felt that the diversion of a naval operation would be a help but no danger, and hence no worry. See Gottlieb, p. 88.

[22]Buchanan to Grey, No. 22, 27 Feb 1915, FO 371/2481/4295.

[23]Great Britain, House of Commons Debates, 25 Feb 1915. Grey had frequently expressed such sentiments since the Bosnian Crisis of 1908.

[24]CAB 42/2/3.

[25]The Russian aide-memoire was enclosed in Buchanan to Grey, 4 March 1915, FO 371/2481/4295.

[26]Buchanan to Grey, Nos. 256 and 257, ibid.

[27]CAB 42/2/5.

[28]Bertie to Grey, 11 Mar 1915, FO 371/2449/25014.

[29]E.L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, First Series, IV (London, 1952), pp. 635-38 prints the exchange of notes between Russia and Britain which sealed the agreement. Hereafter, D.B.F.P.

[30]French Ambassador (Petrograd) to Russian Foreign Minister, 14 Mar 1915, reprinted in J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, A Documentary Record, 1914-1956, II (Princeton, 1956), p. 9.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Minute of 18 Mar 1915 to Buchanan to Grey, No. 314, FO 371/2449/25014.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Asquith was most doubtful of the wisdom of taking, and the potential for settlement of, Mesopotamia. Memories, II, pp. 82-83.

[35]CAB 42/2/14.

[36]Grey, p. 230.

[37]Grey to Bertie, 24 Aug 1915, FO 371/2490/118547.

[38]Gilbert, III, p. 344. For Samuel's proposal see Lowe and Dockrill, II, p. 97; and Samuel, Memoirs, 142-45.

[39]"Alexandretta and Mesopotamia," Admiralty memorandum, 17 Mar 1915, CAB 42/2/11; and memorandum by Kitchener, CAB 42/2/10.

[40]CAB 42/2/5.

[41]CAB 42/2/10.

[42]Hurewitz, II, p. 11.

[43]See the summary in Drummond to Asquith, 26 Oct 1915, printed in Lowe and Dockrill, III, p. 498.

[44]For British agreements with other Arabian chiefs than Husayn, see Hurewitz, II, p. 12.

[45]"The Future Settlement of Eastern Turkey in Asia and Arabia," memorandum by Sir F.A. Hirtzel, 14 Mar 1915, CAB 42/2/8.

[46]"The Defense of Mesopotamia," memorandum by Barrow, CAB 42/2/8.

[47]Viceroy to IO, 23 Mar 1915, FO 371/2485/29758.

[48]Nicolson to Hardinge, 11 Mar 1915, quoted in Lowe and Dockrill, p. 210.

[49]The terms of reference of the committee bear the date 8 April 1915. It met for the first time on 12 April.

[50]Kedourie, Labyrinth, p. 58, says Sykes' influence was "profound." See also Adelson, 181-82.

[51]CAB 42/3/12 contains the committee's report. The quotation is from paragraph 15. Future references will be to paragraphs only.

[52]para. 90.

[53]Nevakivi, Britain, France, pp. 20-21, prints the series of maps which were appended to the report to show the territorial outlines of the various schemes.

[54]para. 85; Adelson, 184.

[55]para. 70.

[56]para. 21; Kent, p. 120, says that Hirtzel's long memorandum had an effect here.

[57]paras. 25-31.

[58]Nevakivi, p. 19; Adelson, 182.

[59]paras.31-32. Hirtzel's phrase was "one of those superstitions which linger on in offices long after they have lost all reality in practice." Quoted in Kent, p. 121.

[60]paras. 331-32; Nevakivi, p. 23.

[61]From a statement made during the Committee's meetings, quoted in Aaron S. Klieman, "Britain's War Aims in the Middle East in 1915," Journal of Contemporary History (1971), p. 251 n. 25.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

[1]Grey to McMahon, No. 173, 14 Apr 1915, FO 371/2486/34982. All letters cited in this chapter are from this file, unless otherwise noted. In Grey's words, "exactly how much territory should be included in this state it is not possible to define at this stage."

[2]McMahon transmitted the crucial paragraph of the proclamation in his despatch No. 306 of 30 Jun 1915; See also Isaiah Friedman, "The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence and the Question of Palestine," The Journal of Contemporary History, 5, 2 (1970), p. 85.

[3]Minute by Nicolson on McMahon's No. 306.

[4]Viceroy to IO, 23 Jun 1915.

[5]Hankey, I, p. 322.

[6]In the cabinet shuffle of May 1915, Curzon was made Lord Privy Seal, a minor post. Though five Unionists were added to the cabinet, only Bonar Law, as the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, received high office.

[7]Elie Kedourie, "Cairo and Khartoum on the Arab Question, 1915-1918," The Historical Journal, VII, 2 (1964), pp. 281-82; ——, Labyrinth, p. 43.

[8]Hardinge to Chamberlain, 2 Jul 1915, CAB 42/3/11.

[9]Quoted in Kedourie, "Cairo," p. 284. See also Busch, Britain, India, p. 72.

[10]Friedman, p. 87.

[11]The full text of Husayn's claim is printed in Antonius, p. 414. Abdullah's letter of 14 July is ommitted from Great Britain, Parliamentary Command Papers, Cmd. 5957, which prints the rest of the correspondence from both sides.

[12]Antonius, p. 415.

[13]McMahon to FO, No. 450, 22 Aug 1915.

[14]IO to FO, 24 Aug 1915.

[15]FO to McMahon, No. 598, 25 Aug 1915.

[16]McMahon to Husayn, 30 Aug 1915.

[17]Husayn to McMahon, 9 Sep 1915.

[18]Some officials were indeed disdainful. For example, writing years later, Storrs remembered that Husayn's "pretentions bordered on the tragi-comic." Orientations, pp. 160-61.

[19]Liddell-Hart, p. 200.

[20]Dardanelles Committee [hereafter DC], 27 Aug 1915, CAB 42/3/17.

[21]War Committee [WC], 23 Nov 1915, CAB 42/5/20. The War Committee succeeded the Dardanelles Committee in November 1915. Kitchener refused to prejudice the judgement of his generals on the spot. In the end, the War Committee despatched him to Gallipoli to get around his objections. Magnus, pp. 424-28.

[22]Memorandum, 21 Sep 1915, CAB 42/3/26.

[23]DC, 23 Sep 1915, CAB 42/3/28.

[24]DC, 14 Oct 1915, CAB 42/4/9.

[25]DC, 21 Oct 1915 CAB 42/4/15.

[26]Kedourie, Labyrinth, pp. 73-91; Friedman, pp. 90-91.

[27]Ibid., pp. 89-93; Busch, pp. 72-75.

[28]See note 25.

[29]Kedourie, Labyrinth, pp. 93-95; Busch, p. 75.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Antonius, p. 419.

[32]Quoted in Busch, p. 75.

[33]Ibid., p. 73.

[34]Quoted in ibid., p. 76. Also see Kedourie, Labyrinth, p. 93. For the phrase "special measures of administrative control" used in the contemporary despatches, Antonius (p. 420) and Cmd. 5957 (p. 8) read "special administrative arrangements." There remains some dispute as to the translation most faithful to the original Arabic text of McMahon's letter, for that text has been lost.

[35]McMahon to Husayn, 24 Oct 1915.

[36]McMahon to Grey, No. 188, 14 May 1915.

[37]McMahon to Husayn, 14 Dec 1915.

[38]On the importance of Storrs' position in Cairo and his role in the Husayn dealings, see Kedourie, Labyrinth, pp. 34, 67-68, 87-88. Kedourie believes that Storrs devised the phrase "Homs, Aleppo, Hama, Damascus." The frequency with which British officials, including Storrs himself, wrote the phrase out of sensible geographic order suggests strongly that they had only a vague notion of Syrian geography.

[39]In particular see Hardinge's long letter to the India Office of 4 November 1915.

[40]Husayn to McMahon, 1 Jan 1916, Cmd. 5957, p. 12. Antonius, p. 424, has "noted its contents" for "understood its contents."

[41]Letter drafted by Grey to McMahon, 6 Nov 1915. Grey minuted on McMahon to FO, No. 677, 7 Nov 1915, that: "What we want is Arab help now against the Turks."

[42]Minute to McMahon to FO, No. 16, 24 Jan 1916, FO 371/2767/938.

[43]Quoted in Busch, p. 77.

[44]Ibid., p. 81.

[45]Ibid., p. 92, where Hirtzel is quoted as having protested most about the "disingenuousness of the whole affair." See also Kedourie, Labyrinth, pp. 125-26.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER V

[1]Cambon to FO, 31 Aug 1915, FO 371/2480/2506, to which Crewe minuted, "it is impossible entirely to prevent Arabs and Syrians from exhibiting some of the extreme distaste which they have for the French."

[2]Kedourie, Labyrinth, pp. 87-88, 97-99, 102-05, deals with the genesis and treatment of this phrase. McMahon added the notion that each the four towns had their own districts, an inaccurate idea, according to Kedourie.

[3]Grey to McMahon, No. 860, 6 Nov 1915, FO 371/2486/34982.

[4]McMahon to Grey, No. 677, 7 Nov 1915, ibid.

[5]The conversation was reported to McMahon in No. 878, 10 Nov 1915, ibid.

[6]Minutes of the Interdepartmental Conference on the Arab Question, 13 Nov 1915, ibid. Besides Nicolson, others who attended were Clerk and Weakly of the FO, Hirtzel and Holderness of the IO and Callwell and Colonel Parker of the War Office.

[7]Minutes of the meeting of M. Picot with the British delegation, 23 Nov 1915, ibid.

[8]Nevakivi, Britain, France, pp. 30-31.

[9]Clerk's report of the meeting, FO 371/2486/34982. Most of the important place names are shown on the map provided in Appendix I.

[10]Sykes' report is included in McMahon to Grey, No. 707, 20 Nov 1915, ibid.; Nevakivi, pp. 28-29. McMahon claimed that the Arabs agreed to grant France a monopoly of concessionary enterprises in Lebanon and Syria, "Syria being defined as bounded by the Euphrates as far South as Dier-Zor [Dayr-az-Zawr] and from there to Deraa and along the Hedjaz Railway to Ma'an."

[11]Nicolson's report of the meeting with Picot, ibid.

[12]Ibid., marginal note by Grey on Nicolson's report.

[13]The quotation is from "General Staff appreciation of the Evacuation at Gallipoli," signed by A.J. Murray, 22 Nov 1915, CAB 42/5/20. See also Paul Guinn, British Strategy and Politics, 1914-1918 (Oxford, 1965), pp. 116-17 and Sir William Robertson, Soldiers and Statesmen, 1914-1918 (London, 1926), pp. 168-71, 194-200.

[14]See note 7 above.

[15]On Sykes' career, see Shane Leslie, Mark Sykes: His Life and Letters (London, 1923); Christopher Sykes, Two Studies in Virtue (London, 1953); ——, "Memories of My Father," in M. Mindler and C. Bernvant, eds., Explorations (Chicago, 1968), pp. 250-264; and Adelson, Sir Mark Sykes.

[16]Great Britain, House of Commons Debates, 5th Series, LXI (1914), pp. 2162-2170.

[17]Ibid., LIII (1913), pp. 374-81; Leslie, p. 250.

[18]Adelson, pp. 187-194; Busch, pp. 67-71. Wilson, Loyalties, claims that Sykes came to Mesopotamia with his mind made up, "and he set himself to discover facts in favour of his preconceived notions, rather than to survey the situation with an impartial eye."

[19]War Committee, 16 Dec 1915, CAB 42/6/10.

[20]Crewe to Bertie, 17 Dec 1915 and Bertie to Crewe, 21 Nov 1915, CAB 42/6/11.

[21]Memorandum No. 1, Arab Question, received at FO, 5 Jan 1915, initialed by Sykes and George Parker of the FO, FO 371/2767/938.

[22]Magnus, p. 374.

[23]Pingaud, pp. 227-28; Adelson, p. 201, says that no papers survive outlining the actual discussions between Sykes and Picot in early January.

[24]Minutes of a meeting between Sir Mark Sykes and M. Picot, 21 Dec 1915, FO 371/2486/34982.

[25]CAB 42/6/10.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Nevakivi, p. 35.

[28]Macdonogh to Nicolson, 6 Jan 1916, FO 371/2767/938.

[29]Director of Imperial Defence to Nicolson, n.d., ibid.

[30]Hall to Nicolson, 2 Jan 1916, ibid.

[31]Sykes to FO, 16 Jan 1916, ibid.

[32]Husayn to McMahon, 5 Nov 1915.

[33]McMahon to Husayn, 14 Dec 1915.

[34]Husayn to McMahon, 1 Jan 1915, Cmd. 5957, p. 13.

[35]Nicolson to Grey, 2 Mar 1916, FO 371/2767/938.

[36]Minute to IO to FO, 28 Feb 1916 and Nicolson to Crewe, 9 Mar 1915, ibid.

[37]Present at the meeting at which the Sykes-Picot draft was endorsed were Grey, Kitchener, Bonar Law, Crewe, Holderness, Hirtzel, Nicolson and a representative of the Admiralty. CAB 37/142/10.

[38]Minute to McMahon to FO, No. 83, 17 Apr 1916, FO 371/2768/938.

[39]Nicolson to Grey, 29 Dec 1915, and the memorandum for the cabinet by Grey of the same date, FO 371/2492/200744.

[40]Grey to Buchanan, no. 3123, 29 Dec 1915, ibid.; Smith, Struggle, pp. 354-58.

[41]Nicolson's minutes attached to a list of Djemal's conditions, 29 Dec 1915, ibid.

[42]Buchanan to FO, Nos. 237 and 238, 10 and 19 Feb 1916, FO 371/2767/938. Pingaud, p. 229.

[43]"... the Erzerum victory may whet the Russian's appetite," minute by L. Oliphant to Buchanan to FO, No. 278, ibid.; FO to Buchanan, 23 Feb 1916, ibid.

[44]Nicolson to Grey, 5 Feb 1916, ibid.

[45]Buchanan to Grey, No. 345, 10 Mar 1916, ibid.

[46]Ibid., minute by Crewe.

[47]Buchanan to FO, No. 351, 12 Mar 1916, ibid.

[48]Note for Clayton from Sykes in FO to McMahon, N. 287, 14 Apr 1916, FO 371/2768/938.

[49]Buchanan to FO, 14 Mar 1916, and Grey minute to same; Grey to Buchanan, 14 Mar 1916, FO 371/2767/938. For Sykes' growing interest in Zionism, see Elie Kedourie, "Sir Mark Sykes and Palestine," ch. xv in Arabic Political Memoirs (London, 1974), pp. 236-243; and Adelson, pp. 206-207.

[50]Minute to Buchanan, No 471, 3 Apr 1916, FO 371/2767/938; Pingaud, p. 229 n. 1.

[51]D.B.F.P., pp. 241-249, prints the correspondence embodying the agreement.

[52]Ibid., p. 247.

[53]Ibid., p. 242.

[54]Ibid., p. 247-50.

[55]The map has been reproduced in several books. The reproduction in Antonius, opposite p. 249, is quite good. See a facsimile of the map in Appendix I.

[56]D.B.F.P., p. 245.

[57]Ibid., pp. 248-49.

FOOTNOTES FOR CONCLUSION

[1]Quoted in Sir George Arthur, The Life of Lord Kitchener, III (London, 1920), p. 86.

[2]Quoted in Friedman, pp. 84-85.

[3]Kedourie, Labyrinth, pp. 124-126.

[4]Ibid., p. 126ff.

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APPENDIX I

MAP OF THE TERRITORIAL ARRANGEMENTS EMBODIED IN THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT

SYKES - PICOT AGREEMENT OF 1916